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WOMAN

VOLUME II

ROMAN WOMEN

BY

REV. ALFRED BRITTAIN

EDITION DE LUXE

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Woman

In all ages and in all countries

TULLIA, DAUGHTER OF SERVIUS

After the painting by E. Hildebrand

We have had the good queen, now we encounter the bad. . . . Tullia was of that type of which Shakespeare has given a picture in Lady Macbeth. . . . Lucius, her husband, with an armed band, repaired to the Senate and seated himself on the throne. King Servius appeared, but no one thought it worth while to hinder Lucius from throwing the aged ruler down the steps of the Senate house; which he manfully did.

Tullia was the instigator of this coup d'état; *and impatient to learn its success, drove to the Forum, and, calling her husband from the Senate chamber, was the first to hail him as king. But Lucius commanded her to return home; and the tradition runs that as she was going thither her chariot wheels passed over the dead body of her royal father.*

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ILLUSTRATED

PHILADELPHIA
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Preface

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PREFACE

THE student of history does not proceed far in his researches before he discovers that human nature is a fixed quality. Other lands, other manners; other times, other customs. But the man behind the manner is essentially the same; the woman under the changed custom is not thereby rendered essentially different, any more than she is by a varying of costume. The women of ancient Rome exemplified the same virtues, and were impelled by the same foibles as are the women of to-day. And the difference in environment, the vanished conditions of Roman life, gain large scientific interest from the fact that they did not result in any dissimilarity of fundamental character. If, by the most violent exercise of the imagination, it were possible to transport a female infant of the twentieth century, and cause her to be reared among the women of the Augustan age, she would fit as naturally into her surroundings as she would into the present society of London or of New York. Her legal status would be different; her moral conceptions would be unlike those of the present age; her duties, pleasures, privileges, and limitations would combine to make the accidents of life very different. But underneath all this, the same humanity, the same femininity, the same habits of mind are revealed. Herein is the chief use of history—above that of gratifying natural curiosity—the ascertaining how human nature

will comport itself under varying conditions. The author hopes that the following pages, wherein the Roman woman is taken as an illustration, will be found of use to the student of the science of humanity, and not uninteresting to the reader inquisitive as to the manner of the ancient civilization.

ALFRED BRITTAIN.

Chapter I

The Woman of Legendary Rome

I

THE WOMAN OF LEGENDARY ROME

THE conditions which governed the life of woman in the earliest days of Roman history are too far removed from the searchlight of historical investigation for us to essay to indicate them with any degree of fulness and accuracy of detail. While it is true that the ancient writers have bequeathed to us records of historic events from the very founding of their nation, the source of their information is very questionable and its authenticity extremely doubtful. Rome did not cultivate literature until very late in her history; she was too greatly preoccupied in her rôle of conquering the world. At a time when every Greek was acquainted with the noblest poetry produced by his gifted race, Rome had not produced a single writer whose name has been preserved. And if at that time she had possessed any men of letters, it is quite certain that there were few of her citizens who would have been able to read their works. Hence, when the first attempt was made to write her history, the authors depended principally for their material on traditions and legends which, as is the case with all such lore, had gained greatly in marvellousness at the expense of historical value. In addition to these sources, it is probable that during the early centuries annals were kept of the principal happenings in the

State. According to Cicero, they were written at the end of each year by the high priest. These records were used by the first historians; and it is likely that the latter were not so greatly restrained, by their literary conscience, from enlarging on the material, as they were tempted, according to the power of their imagination, to present a picture both interesting and satisfactory to the national pride. In many cases, as where the exact words of their characters are reported, the ancient historians evidently deemed that any deficiencies in the matter of proof were abundantly atoned for by the explicitness of the information given.

As to the historical value of legends, that is a question upon which modern writers are inclined to disagree. Since the inauguration of the higher criticism, it has been the fashion for extremists entirely to disown any belief in the *dramatis personæ* of ancient traditions. They claim that the names and the actions thus celebrated usually represent natural forces and historic evolutions; though, to the ordinary student, this would seem to require a remarkable amount of poetic inventiveness on the part of an undeveloped people. Moreover, it is not, perhaps, without reason that the student often looks upon the manner in which modern scholars reject the traditional contributions of the old historians as being a little arbitrary. What traveller has not found his patience sorely tried, while viewing with reverence the reputed site of some heroic or sacred occurrence of far-off days, as he recalled to memory the fact that the latest authorities hold that, while the thing might have taken place a few miles to the east or a short distance to the north, it, for certain erudite but unconvincing reasons, could not possibly have occurred on the spot where it has been located by the continuous belief of centuries?

The story of Rome from its founding to the end of the regal period, as it is told in the ancient classics, is no longer accepted as history. It is, for the most part, classified with those mythical creations with which an uncultured people endeavor to account for the origin and the evolution and revolutions of their race. Yet, passing over the marvellous and the manifestly impossible, why may we not at least claim the right to believe the compilers of these ancient legends, when they tell us of certain names that were great in the beginning of their nation? Modern criticism may be right in asserting that it is not likely that the city on the Tiber was called Roma because a man named Romulus selected an uninhabited site and built upon it. Yet why may we not be allowed to believe that in those early times there was one hero so strong and masterful that he came to be known as preëminently the "Man of Rome"? The character may have been a real one, even though the city gave him his name, instead of the reverse, as later generations surmised. And inasmuch as there is an Alexandria, not to speak of innumerable modern "villes" with well-known surnames for prefixes, it need not be thought a thing entirely incredible that the ancient city was really called after the man who established its importance.

It is the habit of modern historians to look with suspicion upon stories such as those which form our sole material for any personal illustration in this present chapter, because they are of a kind so generally found in the legends of all nations. But may not the multiplication of these long-lived narratives, instead of disproving the intrinsic truth of any given one, simply serve to illustrate the fact that, human nature being a permanent factor, the doings of men under similar circumstances, in any age or locality, will be marked by a uniformity of character? For our

present purpose, however, if in such twilight as is given by long-preserved monuments and ancient relics, we choose to fancy that we perceive, moving about in their daily life, the feminine forms of traditional lore, the combination will only serve to form a more human, and really not less accurate, picture.

The limits of our subject do not require that we should go back so far as the epoch of Æneas, the hero of Troy; nor need we take into consideration the part which he and Lavinia, his wife, may have played upon the Latin shores. Their traditional coming to Italy simply serves to indicate the fact that nearly all the tribes which inhabited the country at the commencement of Roman history were of the same branch of the great Aryan race as the Greeks. The Romans were the brothers of the Greeks. The former were of that same lithe, supple-bodied, straight-featured type which the wonderful art of the latter has enthroned, for all the ages, as the noblest realization of ideal physical beauty.

But when we consider the rude conditions under which life was passed, it is probable that the highest examples of feminine grace would, in many respects, be open to severe criticism from the civilized and artificial taste which has prevailed in after ages. Those were the days of Arcadian simplicity, which poetry has peopled with sweet and enticing Phyllises and Chloes, whose only occupation was to listen to the pipings of languishing shepherds. But, in reality, though life was simple and wants were few, the women, as in all semi-civilized communities, gave an overplus of labor in return for the special exertions of the men in the chase and the combat. Hence, though the poetic conception may be alluring, we are compelled to believe that the reality possessed but few advantages that could arouse the envy of a modern village maiden. The woman

of earliest Rome was wholly a product of nature, endowed only with the unfailing charms of femininity, which were solely reinforced with the perfect health and vigor which come from a simple life.

Of such a type we may imagine Rhea Sylvia, the legendary mother of Romulus and Remus. She was the daughter of a king, but one who was not a monarch in the later significance of the title. Of kings there were many in the Latium of those days. The title meant merely the patriarch of a clan, or the head man of a small city. The regal abode was probably a small, round structure, built of wood and roofed with straw. It may have consisted of only one room, with a hole in the ceiling to admit light and allow the smoke to escape. Of furniture there was little more than rude tables and grass or leaf covered couches, together with the Lares, or household gods. But though life conditioned by such meagre accessories was simple, it was by no means idle, and there existed no such contempt for labor and handicraft among the Latin tribesmen as grew up in later times. The king himself followed the plow, while his wife and daughters were busy with the distaff and spindle, the hand loom and the needle. It was the duty of the women to spin the wool and to make all the clothing for the household. Education consisted solely of the training in the requirements of this simple life, and was provided by no school other than the daily experience which the boys and girls gathered among their elders. The art of writing was in the earliest days not entirely unknown, though, during long years of slow development, it was employed only in painting public records on leaves and skins; or, if greater permanence was required, the records were scratched upon tablets of wood. The amusements of the people consisted mainly of the festivals and athletic games which were

held in honor of the gods. If it might only be believed that this life was as pleasant as it is pictured by Virgil, it would be easy to sympathize with the poet when he declares that he pined for such an existence himself. "The husbandman cleaves the earth with the crooked plow. . . . Winter comes: the Sicyonian berry is pounded in the oil presses; and the autumn lays down its various productions. . . . Meanwhile, the sweet babes twine around their parents' necks; his chaste family maintain their purity. The swain himself celebrates festal days; and extended on the grass, where a fire is in the middle, and where his companions crown the bowl, invokes thee, O Lanæus, making libation. On an elm is set forth to the masters of the flock prizes to be contended for with the winged javelin; and they strip their rustic bodies for the friendly struggle." Elsewhere the poet describes a home scene, where the man is working by the light of the winter fire: "Meanwhile, his spouse, cheering by song her tedious labor, runs over the webs with the shrill shuttle; or over the fire boils down the liquor of the luscious must, and skims with leaves the tide of the trembling cauldron. This life of old the ancient Sabines followed; this, Remus and his brother strictly observed; thus Etruria grew in strength; and thus too did Rome become the glory and beauty of the world."

Unlike their sisters of Greece, the women of Rome were never secluded; yet their duties and responsibilities were strictly confined to domestic bounds. Here, however, while the husband was master, the wife was mistress. She took equal part with him in the worship of the family Lares, which worship was a prominent feature in every Roman household; and if he were a priest, she, by her marriage to him, became a priestess. But, except in certain religious institutions, she had not the

slightest active connection with State or public affairs. That is, she had no such connection in theory and according to law; but it was in Rome as it has been in all ages and in all countries: there were no laws or customs that could prevent a woman who possessed gifts of mind and cherished ambitious projects from gaining some tool by means of whom her hand might turn the affairs of State to her will.

To this strenuous class of women, however, Rhea Sylvia did not belong. Her euphonious name has been preserved, not because of any active influence which she wielded over the destinies of men, but because, through the simple function of motherhood, she introduced into the history of the world a strong man. She was the daughter of Numitor, to whom his father had bequeathed the kingdom of the Sylvian clan. But Amulius, another son, had driven his brother into exile, and, in order to secure himself in his usurpation, had put all his nephews to death. Rhea was spared, probably on account of the fact that the law did not allow women to reign, and hence her existence held no threat. Nevertheless, since of the women of princely houses are born possible claimants to thrones, Amulius deemed it best that some preventive measure should be taken. He evidently did not wish to commit unnecessary barbarities; and he also liked, if possible, to cover his self-protective actions with a gloss of seeming generosity. Rhea Sylvia should be the priestess of Vesta. Hers should be the honorable duty of guarding the perpetual fire which burned on the sacred hearth of the city. Thus she, as was befitting the daughter of Numitor, would be held in as high regard among the people as the queen herself. Incidentally, this would also preclude the possibility of any grandson appearing to claim the throne of the exiled Numitor; for the Vestals were most rigidly

pledged to a life of constant virginity. But how often have the gods, and sometimes even Nature herself, thwarted the most cunningly devised schemes of men! Upon this truism Amulius must have reflected, when, without any previous declaration of her intention, Rhea Sylvia introduced to the community a sturdy pair of twins. She declared that Mars was the father of her offspring; either, as Livy discreetly remarks, because she believed it to be so, or because a god seemed the most creditable author of her offence. In those times, the possibility and the frequent occurrence of such matches were devoutly believed, and the first historians freely availed themselves of this belief to enhance the glory of their race, or of a powerful family, by establishing for it the reputation of a divine origin. The idea of superhuman parentage was also a convenient means by which to account for, and sometimes excuse, the unusual character and extraordinary deeds of ancient heroes. In those days, when men's faith was simple and uncritical, belief in divine incarnation presented no serious difficulty.

It is evident, however, that Amulius was not greatly impressed with a sense of the sacredness of the children of the warrior-god. He threw the mother into prison, and ordered her sons to be drowned in the Tiber. But, as is usually and fortunately the case in legendary history, this order was intrusted to one who was either too pitiful or too careless to give it thorough execution. The infants, in their cradle or upon a rude raft, were set afloat on the river, which was at that time in flood; the waters, however, quickly subsided, and the boys were left alive on dry ground. Their cries attracted a shepherd named Faustulus, and by him they were carried to his home, where they were reared by his wife Laurentia. This woman is given a bad name by the ancients. They say

that she was also called Lupa; and Lupa being the name applied to a woman of unchaste character, as well as the term used to designate a she-wolf, in this manner the sceptics accounted for the marvellous story of the sons of Rhea being suckled by a wolf. But whatever may have been the failings of Laurentia, if there be any truth whatever in the legend, she made atonement by preserving the life of the founder of Rome. We will not follow these traditions in their well-known details. Whether or not Romulus was indeed the first to select the site of the city which was to spread over seven hills by the Tiber and from them dominate the world is as impossible to determine as it would be unimportant to our subject if ascertained. The purpose before us is solely to inquire what part and lot woman had in the founding of the infant State. That her rôle was mainly a passive one may be taken for granted, as being in accordance with the status of the weaker sex in the childhood of every race and nation.

The ancient historians, who accepted the Romulus legend without question, portray for us the growing town, so sturdily and rapidly advancing in power and fame as to excite the wonder and the jealousy of neighboring communities. One cause to which is attributed this prosperity is interesting, since it led to a famous episode in which women played a leading though an unwilling part. We are told that Romulus opened within the bounds of the city an asylum, or place of refuge, where fugitives from justice or from servitude were received under the protection of the gods. This attracted new citizens in great numbers, but such as contributed nothing to the respectability of the new State. The new-comers were, almost entirely, unmarried men; and soon the paucity of women in Rome gave cause for grave concern. Romulus had appointed a number of the leading citizens, whom he

named as Senators, to assist him in the government. But it was not in the power of these city fathers to aid him materially in securing a continued growth of the community, unless wives could be provided. Ambassadors were despatched to the neighboring States, requesting treaties of alliance, and especially begging the privilege of intermarriage. Owing, doubtless, to the questionable character of the newly acquired inhabitants of Rome, this was a favor which no city was disposed to grant. Everywhere the ambassadors were confronted with the suggestion that an asylum be opened for women also, for only by such a plan could suitable mates be obtained for the men of Rome. Another reason, however, why wives were hard to obtain was the fact that women were comparatively scarce throughout Latium. The custom of exposing female infants to death was prevalent there, as in many other ancient races, daughters being looked upon as a source of weakness and expense to a family, as sons were a gain and a strength. Wives, however, being a necessity, the fathers of boys often secured as brides for their sons girls as soon as they were born. This laid upon the parents of the latter the obligation to spare their lives and rear them. There is no evidence that the purchase of wives was ever a custom among the Romans. Indeed, the opposite was from time immemorial the practice; a dower went with the bride. Hence it is easy to see why the Latin fathers were unwilling to bestow their daughters,—who were not likely to remain on their hands for lack of suitors,—and especially the dowers that went with them, upon the adventurous young men who had sought at Rome asylum from justice or vengeance.

But in those ages, and especially in such a matter as the winning of wives, diplomacy was a resource not wholly depended upon. Among the marriage ceremonies of later

times, there was a custom of parting the hair of the Roman bride with a spear. In this we find a reminiscence of the period when marriage by capture was resorted to when there seemed urgent necessity. Thus Romulus determined that what could not be gained by fair means should be obtained by the best method which came to hand. At the festival of the god Consus, appropriately the deity who presided over hidden deliberations, the seizure of the Sabine maidens was planned and carried out; and thus the Romans took to themselves wives. How closely this well-known story corresponds with facts, of course, cannot be determined. Possibly many of its details are attempts of later ages to account for wedding customs, the origin of which had been forgotten. But it is very probable that marriage by capture was common in the embryonic civilization of early Rome. And there may have been one occasion when this rude method of wooing was adopted in so flagrant and wholesale a manner that it led to a war with the Sabines, by which the remembrance of the event was perpetuated in the traditions of the people. Michelet, commenting on this story in his brilliant manner, says: "The progress of humanity is striking. Springing in India from mystical love, the ideal of woman assumes in Germany the features of savage virginity and gigantic force; in Greece, those of grace and stratagem, to arrive among the Romans at the highest pagan morality, to virgin and conjugal dignity. The Sabines only follow their ravishers on compulsion, but, become Roman matrons, they refuse to return to the paternal mansion, disarm their fathers and their husbands, and unite them in one city." Plutarch says that it was in order to obtain forgiveness that the Romans assured certain privileges to their wives. No labor other than spinning should be demanded of them; they should take the inside of the path;

nothing indecent should be done or said in their presence; they should not be summoned before the criminal judges; and their children should wear the *pretexta* and the *bulla*. Thus in the time of the Greek historian the barbarism of the old times was forgotten, and to the primitive constitution was attributed all the civilization which it required centuries to bring about.

As fair Helen brought woe to Troy, so the abduction of the Sabine maidens was followed by the bitter vengeance of their indignant masculine relatives. If we may believe the old historians, the women soon became reconciled to their enforced condition as wives of the Romans. Doubtless the writers drew this conclusion more from their knowledge of the yielding disposition of feminine nature than from any precise acquaintance with the facts. It being totally uncustomary for the woman to be allowed any decision in the matter, it was a thing of small importance to her whether she was taken by her husband, without either her consent or that of her father, or whether she was given by her father to her husband, equally without being consulted.

The Sabines waited patiently for a favorable opportunity; and when it came, they attacked the Romans with good success. They even gained possession of the strongest fortifications of the city. But, according to the legend, they could not have won such advantage had it not been for the love of gaud of Tarpeia, the daughter of one of the captains of Romulus. Tatius, the King of the Sabines, induced her to open for him the gates, promising as a reward the golden bracelets which his soldiers wore upon their left arms. It is noticeable that the difficulties which must have surrounded an interview between the king and the maiden are discreetly ignored by the tradition. She agreed to open the gate, on the pretence of

going forth to draw water for the sacrifice, and the Sabine men were thereupon to rush in. Everything took place as arranged, except that the misguided Tarpeia received much more than she had bargained for. Her request was for "that which they wore upon their left arms," not remembering the fact that upon that arm they also carried their shields. The soldiers, as they entered, either through haste, or because they hated treachery though willing to avail themselves of it, threw at her their shields as well as their bracelets, and the girl was crushed to death beneath their weight. A part of the hill which the Sabines thus gained was ever afterward called the Tarpeian Rock; and it became a place of execution, traitors being hurled from its summit. There is much about this story which justifies the suspicion that it arose from, or at least was adopted by, a desire on the part of the Romans to explain a defeat, rather than from any verifiable historical foundation. It looks like a case of the natural vanity of warlike men saving itself by means of an ungallant slur on the characteristic vanity of women.

Taking the account as it stands, matters were now very serious for the Romans. The enemy had gained the citadel, and a bloody conflict ensued. But the women whose abduction had brought on these troubles were also to be the means of making peace. As the battle was raging, the two armies were astounded to behold the Sabine women rushing from the homes of the Romans, not to make their escape, but to throw themselves between the combatants. With tears, they entreated their fathers and brothers to hear them. Their plea was voiced by a captive named Hersilia, who some historians hold was the wife of that Hostilius who afterward became King of Rome, while others claim that she had been taken by Romulus himself. Plutarch gives us her speech—of course, drawing from his

own imagination, though he is not far from what might have been the truth; for anyone may guess what would be likely on such an occasion. She said: "It is true we were ravished away unjustly and violently by those whose wives we now are; but that being done, we are bound to them by the strictest bonds, so that it is impossible for us not to weep and tremble at the danger of the men whom once we hated. You now come to force away wives from their husbands, and mothers from their children. Which shall we call the worse, their love making or your compassion? Restore to us our parents and kindred, but do not rob us of our husbands and children. We entreat you not to make us twice captive." Whereupon, the Sabines learning that their daughters were not yearning to be rescued, and having no other good reason for carrying on the fight, a truce was declared. With a zealous determination to leave nothing unaccounted for, the tradition relates how the women took their kindred into the city and proudly exhibited the comforts and indulgences they enjoyed with their husbands, whose wooing had been so unmannerly. This might well be, as the Sabines were a pastoral people and unaccustomed to what were to them the luxuries of city life. So peace was made; and we are told that it was in commemoration of this event that the ladies of Rome ever afterward celebrated the festival of the Matronalia on the first of March. It was their custom to ascend in the morning in procession to the temple of Juno, and place at the feet of the goddess the flowers with which their heads were crowned. In the evening, in memory of the tokens of gratitude which the Sabine women received from their Roman husbands, they remained at home, adorned in their best attire, waiting for the customary gifts of their husbands and friends. At a date far later, we find Tibullus debating with himself,

in an exquisite little poem, what gift he shall send to his beloved Neæra on the Calends of March. With the customary valuation which an author sets upon his own productions, he decides that he can give her nothing more acceptable than a copy of his poems, beautifully bound and adorned.

Every nation has its traditional Golden Age, a period to which the poetic philosophers of degenerate after times love to refer in the assumption that then all things were at their best and men were perfectly happy. So all Roman ideals of civic concord are concentrated in and derived from the legendary reign of Numa Pompilius. He is described as not seeking the kingdom, but preferring the pleasures of reflection in a quiet life with Tatia, his like-minded and noble wife. But the honor was forced upon him, and he reigned in the spirit of a true philosopher. He formulated laws and established a system of morals in accordance with principles worthy of Marcus Aurelius. To him is given the credit of organizing the religious institutions of the Romans, and especially the college of Vestal Virgins. We have seen that, before his time, to certain maidens was assigned the duty of guarding the sacred fire, and at the same time their virgin purity. But Numa was said to have formulated the rules of the order, to have assigned precisely its duties, and to have built a house for Vesta. But there is not the least doubt that around the name Numa have clustered, and to him have been attributed, many advances in civilization which were the growth of centuries. This seems especially probable in view of the fact that Numa was a Sabine, one of the pastoral race which was naturally less advanced in culture than the people who were gathered in cities.

What improvement may have found its way into the conditions of feminine life during this period, it is difficult

to determine. The useful arts are said to have grown greatly in favor. Numa is credited with having instituted guilds for the encouragement of flute blowers, goldsmiths, coppersmiths, carpenters, fullers, dyers, potters, and shoemakers. Life would thus become more comfortable, and also be brightened by that which was pleasurable and ornamental. This supposes an enlargement of the sphere of the home, a consequent increasing of the interests and responsibilities of the women, and a softening effect upon their nature. There is also an indication that, as in ancient Germany, though the women may have had no part in the direct government of the State, yet the counsels of certain of their sex were followed by the lawmakers with a reverence akin to religion. There is a strong suggestion of feminine influence in the legends concerning the marital relations of Numa. Plutarch relates that Tatia, Numa's estimable first wife, was separated from him by death after thirteen years of wedded felicity, and that after this he never married again, but sought to console himself by melancholy ramblings in the fields and woods. This gave rise to the story that, in a certain grove, he was accustomed to meet the goddess Egeria, who not only favored him with her love, but also endowed him with the wisdom to perform his duties with marvellous success. On the other hand, Livy, who probably knew neither more nor less about it, says that Numa consecrated this grove, with its grotto and spring of living water, to the Muses, who were accustomed there to meet his wife Egeria. Whether this Egeria is to be regarded as a mortal woman, perhaps the lawful wife of the king, or, what is considerably less likely, a divine being, cannot be decided from these traditions. But they surely have a value in that they indicate the willingness of the earliest Romans to attribute excellence in statesmanship on the part of

their best men to the inspiration of members of the fair and gentle sex.

After the death of Numa, the Romans elected as their king Tullus Hostilius, and thus a turbulent warrior succeeded the peace-loving lawgiver. In this reign, instead of the poetic anachronism which portrays an abnormally advanced civilization, we are brought back again to earth and to history and to a more accurate description of the progress of the people. Much is revealed in the story by which Livy, in his inimitable manner, accounts for the Sororium Tigillium, or the Sister's Post, a monument which he says was existent in his own day. Here we not only encounter the terrible right of the father of a family over the lives of his children, but we also see that the tender instincts of a woman's love were accounted as nothing in comparison with loyalty to the family and her duty of hatred to the enemies of the State. The heroic Horatius, single-handed after the death of his brothers, had slain the three champions of the Alban army, and thus provided the first taste of the delight of subjugation to the city which was destined to become the mistress of the world. In the triumphal return to Rome, Horatius marched foremost of all the army, carrying before him the spoils of the three Alban brothers. As they neared the Porto Capena, the Roman women came forth to welcome the victors home. Among the rest came Horatia, the sister of the youthful conqueror. As she ran to embrace him, she noticed upon his shoulder a familiar robe; in fact, it was a soldier's tunic which she had wrought with her own hands for one of the vanquished Curiatii, to whom she had been betrothed. The truth flashed upon the damsel's mind in an instant. Her lover was dead, and that by the hand of her brother. With tears and lamentations, she began to call upon the name of her betrothed. Possibly with her cries of grief she joined

bitter upbraidings of her brother, who had saved himself and Rome at the cost of her bereavement. His sister's lamentations, in the midst of his own triumph and the great public rejoicing, so greatly angered the excited youth that he drew his sword and stabbed her to the heart. As he did this, he cried: "Go with thy unseasonable love; go and rejoin thy betrothed, thou who forgettest thy dead brothers, and him who remains, and thy country! So perish every woman who shall dare to lament the death of an enemy!" This atrocious murder raised, of course, a profound sensation among the people. They did not know which ought to outweigh the other: his awful crime or his brilliant exploit for the public good. The king appointed duumvirs to try him. By these he was condemned to be beaten with rods, within or without the walls of the city, and then to be hanged.

But the law gave to Horatius the right of appeal to the people, and in this second trial he found an effective advocate in his own father. The old man declared that he considered his daughter deservedly slain. Were it not so, he said, he would by his own authority as father have inflicted punishment on his son. It seems probable, however, that Horatius senior took this course of argument, not because he did not regret his daughter, but because he hoped thereby to save himself from being bereft of all his children. "Go, lictor," he said, "bind those hands which but a little while since, being armed, established sovereignty for the Roman people. Strike him within the town, if thou wilt, but in presence of these trophies and spoils; without the town, but in the midst of the tombs of the Curiatii. Into what place can you lead him where the monuments of his glory do not protest against the horror of his punishment?" The tears of the father and the intrepidity of the son won for the latter absolution;

but the father was commanded to make expiatory sacrifices, and these were ever afterward continued in the Horatian family. As a further punishment, a beam was laid across the street and the young man made to pass under it, with veiled head, as under a yoke.

Chronologically, this seems to be the appropriate place to introduce some reference to another race which, to no small extent, affected the early history of Rome and also the status of the Roman woman. From Etruria came the ancestor of the Tarquins, that proud dynasty which provided two legends of the extreme opposite types of women: Tullia, the cruel and ambitious queen, and Lucretia, the ideal of conjugal faithfulness. Tanaquil, the never-forgotten helpmeet of an able man, also came from this people.

The Etruscans have ever been a puzzle to historians and one of the principal enigmas in ethnology. Entirely unlike the Hellenic or Italiote races in appearance as well as in customs, even the ancients were at a loss to surmise whence this remarkable people originated. Dionysius says, "they claimed alliance with no people in the world." Inquiry regarding them would not be so interesting, were it not that they have left such an abundance of proofs of their proficiency in art and advancement in civilized industry. At the time of which we are writing, they possessed the very respectable beginning of a literature. We have nearly two thousand of their inscriptions; but hardly a word are we able to interpret, for the Etruscan language is to-day what the Egyptian hieroglyphics were before Champollion. These people were the artists and the manufacturers for all Italy. In the museums of Europe are to be seen specimens of their art, such as statues, beautifully ornamented vases, bas-reliefs, and jewelry, which can but excite the wonder of the beholder by the richness of their execution. Their tombs have been found

to contain great quantities of such treasures, which they were in the habit of burying with their chiefs. Reclining on one of these tombs are the carved effigies of a man and his wife, represented as though resting upon a couch. If these figures give as correct an idea of the appearance of the Etruscans as they indicate artistic ability, they were a thickset people, with retreating foreheads, aquiline noses, and eyes rather oblique—all suggestive of the Asiatic type. The barbarous religious ideas of the Etruscans rendered the race gloomy and fatalistic. Their priests were supposed to be experts in divining the future; and their gods often required to be propitiated with human sacrifices. Their civilization had a powerful effect upon that of Rome. In Etruria women were treated with a respect unusual among the races of that time; and it may have been owing to this influence that the women of Rome enjoyed so much more liberty than their sisters of Greece. On the other hand, to the Etruscans' characteristic delight in cruel sports has been attributed the introduction of gladiatorial contests in the arena at Rome.

The traditional account of the origin of the Tarquin family is very uncertain historical data, the founder being represented as the son of a foreigner in Tarquinii, a city of Etruria, and his name Lucumo; while history seems to indicate that the *lucumon* was an Etruscan chief magistrate. However, we will take the legendary account as it stands. In it we are told that Lucumo had married a noble maiden of Tarquinii, called Tanaquil, a name that in after times became a household word among the Romans. When they wished to hold before their daughters the ideal of a good housewife, they exhorted them to emulate Queen Tanaquil. She was also called Caia Cæcilia, "the good spinner"; and to her memory and industry all young brides paid honor. From what is told of her, however,

she seems rather to have been an extraordinary type of the women whose ambitions urge their husbands in the quest of high political position and whose wise intuitions help to support their spouses in those positions when attained.

These Etruscans were wealthy; but Lucumo could hope for no place of influence in Etruria, for the reason that he was the son of a foreigner. It is to Tanaquil, however, that the credit is given of having persuaded him to migrate to Rome. We can imagine her argument to have been that, in the new State, where all the nobility were of recent origin and where men were elevated for merit rather than for family descent, the courage and energy of her husband would give him the best chances of success. The story relates that, as they were about to enter Rome, an eagle swooped down from the skies and seized Lucumo's cap in its talons. After flying around the chariot with loud screams, to their great astonishment the bird replaced the cap on the man's head. In those times, the movements of birds were looked upon as the surest kind of omens, as indeed they were so regarded for centuries afterward; and among the first historians, the tradition of the entrance into Rome of a man destined to be its king, in which there was no mention made of an omen, would simply indicate a defect in the narrative which literary justice would require them to make good. Tanaquil, availing herself of the science of augury, in which the Etruscans were especially expert, declared that this was a sign that the highest honors were to be heaped upon her husband's head. Down to very late times, Romans, even those of the keenest intellect, were largely influenced in their actions and decisions by such signs; and it is easy to see how omens might seem valid, inasmuch as they contributed in no small degree to their

own fulfilment by encouraging or depressing those who thoroughly believed in them.

In the city, our legendary Etruscan changed his name to Lucius Tarquinius Priscus. His riches and talents soon availed with the Romans, and he was appointed guardian to the king's children. When Ancus died, Tarquin succeeded in persuading the people to elect him to the throne; and he was not mistaken in his estimation of his own fitness for that position, for his rule was in every way beneficial. He enlarged the territory of the State and undertook many worthy public works. To this period is attributed the building of the great subterranean sewers for draining the city. Lasting, though inelegant, monuments these; for after twenty-five centuries have passed away, and after so many Romes have arisen and fallen above them, the *cloacæ* of Tarquinius Priscus still remain and admirably serve their purpose. The historians further tell us that this Etruscan introduced into the kingly style a magnificence hitherto unknown in Rome. This was especially manifested in his embroidered robes, which were the skilful work of Tanaquil the Spinner. Here was a queen who might have been taken for the model of the virtuous woman depicted in the Book of Proverbs. The heart of her husband could safely trust in her. She did him good and not evil all the days of her life. "She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands." But Tanaquil was as well qualified to assist her husband in his political projects as to array him in a manner befitting his station. This is evidenced by her behavior at his death, which took place at the hand of assassins. We will allow Livy to relate in his own words what happened. "When those who were around had raised up the king in a dying state, the lictors seized on the men who were endeavoring to escape. Upon this

THE CONVERT

After the painting by G. R. C. Boulanger

The noble matron Pomponia Græcina has been credited by tradition with having found consolation for the sorrows of the times in that new faith which was undermining old Rome, both literally in the catacombs and figuratively in the rapidity with which it was making converts; but we know not with certainty. . . . Græcina was accused of yielding to foreign superstitions. This may have been owing to the peculiarities of her manner. She had been the close friend of that Julia, daughter of Drusus, whom Messalina had forced to kill herself. From this time on, for the space of forty years, Græcina wore nothing but mourning, and was never seen to smile. . . . When the charge of entertaining foreign superstitions was laid against her, she was, in accordance with the ancient law, consigned to the adjudication of her husband. . . . She was adjudged innocent.

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followed an uproar and concourse of the people, wondering what the matter was. Tanaquil, during the tumult, orders the palace to be shut up, thrusts out all who were present; at the same time, she sedulously prepares everything necessary for dressing the wound, as if a hope still remained; yet, in case her hopes should disappoint her, she projects other means of safety. Sending immediately for Servius,—who had married her daughter,—after she had showed him her husband almost expiring, holding his right hand, she entreats him not to suffer the death of his father-in-law to pass unavenged, or his mother-in-law to be an object of insult to their enemies. 'Servius,' she said, 'if you are a man, the kingdom is yours, not theirs, who, by the hands of others, have perpetrated the worst of crimes. Exert yourself, and follow the guidance of the gods. Now awake in earnest. We, too, though foreigners, have reigned. Consider who you are, not whence you have sprung. If your own plans are not matured by reason of the suddenness of this event, then follow mine.' When the uproar and violence of the multitude could scarcely be withstood, Tanaquil addressed the populace from the upper part of the palace through the windows facing the new street—for the royal family resided near the temple of Jupiter Stator. She bids them be of good courage; tells them that the king was stunned by the suddenness of the blow; that the weapon had not sunk deep into his body; that he was already come to himself again; that the wound had been examined, the blood having been wiped off; that all the symptoms were favorable; that she hoped they would see him very soon; and that, in the meantime, he commanded the people to obey the orders of Servius Tullius. That he would administer justice, and perform all the functions of the king. Servius comes forth with the trabea and the lictors, and,

seating himself on the king's throne, decides some cases, but with respect to others pretends that he will consult the king. Therefore, the death being concealed for several days, though Tarquin had already expired, he, under pretence of discharging the duties of another, strengthened his own interest. Then, at length, the matter being made public, and lamentations being raised in the palace, Servius, supported by a strong guard, took possession of the kingdom by the consent of the Senate, being the first who did so without the orders of the people."

Of course, however much or little of all this may have really taken place, the effect of the account is greatly heightened by the brilliant imagination of the historian. But we believe that at least there is enough historical truth in it to show that the early Romans did not consider able statecraft on the part of women an entire impossibility. In regard to Tanaquil's after career as queen-dowager, the legends are totally and regrettably silent; and it is left to us to surmise without data as to how the new king held his own with such an extraordinarily clever mother-in-law; but, from what has just been related, he would seem to have had both the wisdom to appreciate her counsels and the ability to put them into effect.

The Tarquinian dynasty was prolific of remarkable women; and in the legendary history they are set over against each other in sharp contrast. We have had the good queen, now we encounter the bad. Again it is the story of a woman who was ambitious, but this time of one who possessed no moral sentiment to soften her methods, whose respect for that which is honorable in woman weighed nothing against her desire for position. Expediency being furthered by cruelty, she could easily overcome her feminine instincts. She was an exaggerated specimen of that type of which Shakespeare has given an

unfading picture in Lady Macbeth. More than this, Tullia represented for the Romans the very acme of wickedness. All feminine virtue with them culminated in filial obedience and marital faithfulness; Tullia murdered her husband and plotted against her father, and was accessory to his death. The Romans were not abstract thinkers; and it is more than likely that this legend is an accumulation, in one imaginary concrete example, of all feminine depravity, rather than a veritable account of a historic personage. Yet we have no good reason to doubt that there was a vicious Tullia, on whose character this ideal of wickedness was erected.

Servius, the good king, had two daughters, Tullia being the younger. These young women were married to the two sons of Tarquinius Priscus, Lucius and Aruns; the elder daughter being given to the elder son. The consequence of this arbitrary choice on the part of the parents was that a most contrary assortment was made. A stirring and prideful man found himself coupled with a woman of easy, good-natured disposition; and a man of contented mind and contemplative habits was afflicted with a high-spirited and ambitious wife. The haughty Tullia could not endure the thought that there was no material in her husband either for daring or energetic action. She gave her regard to Lucius, who, as she considerately informed Aruns, was worthy to be called a man. She went so far as to intimate to Lucius that if the gods had been possessed of sufficient good judgment to have given her the only man who could appreciate her abilities she would soon see the crown in her own house, instead of in that of her father. This inspired the young man; and they both agreed that the mistakes of the deities should be rectified. It soon conveniently happened that two deaths gave the opportunity for a reassortment; and the nuptials of Lucius and Tullia were quickly celebrated.

Having thus far hurried forward the matter, it was not in the nature of the woman to wait patiently for death to make vacant the throne of the aged Servius. She said that she wanted a husband who would rather possess a throne than hope for it. She stimulated Lucius's courage by asking why he allowed himself to be called a prince, if he had not the spirit to take his own. She suggested that, his grandfather having been a merchant, perhaps it would be as well for him to return to Tarquinii, the original home of the family, and engage in the same peaceful occupation; which is evidence that the facile keenness of a woman's power of expression is not a development of modern education. Being thus encouraged, Lucius, as probably many another statesman has done, considered it more advisable to take the chances of public strife than to live in the certainty of domestic unrest. The time seeming propitious, he repaired with an armed band to the Senate house and seated himself on the throne. King Servius appeared, but no one thought it worth while to hinder Lucius from throwing the aged ruler down the steps of the Senate house; which he manfully did.

Tullia was the instigator of this *coup d'état;* and impatient to learn its success, she drove to the Forum, and, calling her husband from the Senate chamber, was the first to hail him as king. But Lucius commanded her to return home; and the tradition runs that as she was going thither her chariot wheels passed over the dead body of her royal father as it lay in the narrow street. More of the story of this Roman personification of filial iniquity we are not told, except that, in accordance with the inevitable rule of legendary history, she met the Nemesis of her crimes on a later day. The manner of it we shall see in the expulsion of her family from Rome.

The reign of Lucius Tarquin, surnamed Superbus on account of his extraordinary pride, was strong and tyrannous;

but its effect was the aggrandizement of Rome and the increase of her power in Italy. He is credited with some extensive public works, the chief of which was the Capitol. This temple he erected upon the hill which had from time immemorial been held sacred to Jove; for thereupon the people had ofttimes beheld the deity, as Virgil says, "with his right hand shaking his black shield, and summoning the storm clouds to him." For his architectural undertakings the Roman king hired skilled Etruscan workmen, which indicates that his own subjects were as yet laggards in the pursuit of the arts and sciences. Indeed, everything goes to show that the only infant industries which the Romans zealously cultivated at this time were warfare and such agriculture as was necessary to supply the wants of their abstemious life. For their few artistic needs, they depended almost entirely upon the other Italian cities, which in these respects were further advanced.

In the traditional history of the reign of Tarquin Superbus there is included a legend concerning the Sibyl of Cumæ. Of those mysterious women called Sibyls, ten were reputed to have flourished in various parts of the ancient world. She of Cumæ was said to have lived one thousand years; seven hundred of which had expired when Æneas came to Italy and profited by her advice. The probable fact is that there existed a school, or at any rate a succession, of pythonesses at Cumæ, and it is borne out by the fact that to the Sibyl are given no less than seven different names by various ancient authors. These prophetic women used to write their predictions on leaves, which they placed at the entrance of their grotto; and it was very necessary to secure these leaves before they were dispersed by the wind, since, once scattered, they could never again be brought together. It seems, however, that the pythonesses at times transmitted their

wisdom in a more substantial manner; for the Sibyl who came to the palace of Tarquin brought with her nine volumes, which she offered for sale at a very high price. On the monarch's refusal to buy them, she burned three of the books, and demanded the same amount for the remaining six. Tarquin declined to purchase these, and she immediately committed three more to the flames, asking the same sum of money for the remainder. This extraordinary conduct so excited the king's curiosity that he bought the books; and the Sibyl vanished, never again to be seen. It is very appropriate that the last of the Sibyls should disappear just as we begin to find verifiable history taking the place of traditional lore.

What the contents of these books were, or whether the king found reason very greatly to regret that he did not accept the Sibyl's first offer of the whole nine, we do not know. That they were highly valued by the Roman people is shown by the fact that a college of priests was instituted to have the care of them; and they remained in existence until the time of Sylla, when they were destroyed in the flames of the Capitol. The Sibylline verses now extant are universally deemed to be spurious.

The name of Tarquin has been placed on the world's roll of dishonor because of the part one of his family played in that sad story which describes how the rule of the kings of Rome came to an end under a cloud of blackness and blood. The tragedy of Lucretia is one of those pictures which are preserved forever on account of their simplicity and naturalness. The figures are almost titanic in their strength; but they will be recognized as typical of humanity in all time. The actions are coarse, because they proceed from the fundamental virtues and vices which are never separate from the hearts of men and women. The great English dramatist has idealized the workings of

thought and conscience in the principal actors; but there was really nothing except bare, unadorned humanism in every situation. There was the tyranny which always accompanies unbridled power; there was the honest soldier's outspoken pride in the unrivalled beauty and goodness of his wife at home; there was the brutal animalism of the man who heeded no higher instincts; there was the wounded heart that saw no hope but to retrieve honor at the expense of life; there were ensuing grief and revenge. In all this there is nothing subtle, nothing strange, to human knowledge. It simply masses together all the general experiences of the universal man. Yet here is one of the world's most notable dramas; and the picture is interesting, because it portrays with strong colors in one scene all the great motives and traits which sway and color human life.

Lucretia was the daughter of a Roman noble, and she was the wife of Collatinus, one of the Tarquinian family. The Roman army was investing the city of Ardea, the capital of the Rutulians; and the young princes had too little to occupy their time, as the sequel shows, to keep them out of mischief. One day, they were drinking and conversing in the tent of Sextus, the king's son. Soldier fashion, being occupied with wine, their talk turned on the subject of women. Each man extolled the superior charms of his own wife or betrothed. Their conversation doubtless did not range beyond lawful wedded mates, or those who were such in prospect; for in the Rome of those days there existed no class of demi-monde, nor, indeed, were there many women whose reputation for chastity would be liable to criticism even in the freedom of a soldiers' camp. Life then was austere, and morality was intensive rather than extensive. The gallant contention waxed more and more enthusiastic among the comrades, until Collatinus said that there needed to be no dispute

about the matter; that it could be easily seen in a few hours how far his Lucretia exceeded all the rest. Whereupon he challenged them all to ride to Rome and let the matter be decided as each one found his wife occupied on his unexpected arrival. To this they agreed, and immediately galloped to Rome, which they reached in the dusk of the evening. The king's sons found their wives spending their time in luxurious entertainments; whether or not they agreed on any one as being superior to the others, we are not told. But Collatinus's home was some miles out in the country, so that it was visited last of all. Late as it was, they found Lucretia, with her maids, spinning wool in the atrium, or middle hall of the house. Collatinus and his friends were gladly welcomed by the industrious Lucretia, and were provided with bountiful entertainment; and they were not slow to vote that she had easily won the contest. But the beauty of Lucretia's person and mind had made far too deep an impression on Sextus, the son of Tarquin. Throughout the journey back to camp he was revolving in his mind how he might again make a visit to the house at Collatia, in which he did not desire the company of its master.

A few days later, Sextus appeared at Lucretia's door and met a kindly welcome, in which her pure mind mingled no misgiving. There were no locks on the inner doors of the Roman house; for, as Shakespeare makes poor Lucretia tell her story:

> ". . . In the dreadful dead of dark midnight,
> With shining falchion in my chamber came
> A creeping creature with a flaming light,
> And softly cried, 'Awake, thou Roman dame,
> And entertain my love; else lasting shame
> On thee and thine this night I will inflict,
> If thou my love's desire do contradict.'"

His threat was to murder both the lady and one of her male slaves, and to place them so that it would appear that he had killed them to avenge the honor of Collatinus. Thus we may see how poor Lucretia could truly plead:

> "Mine enemy was strong, my poor self weak,
> And far the weaker with so strong a fear;
> My bloody judge forbad my tongue to speak;
> No rightful plea might plead for justice there;
> His scarlet lust came evidence to swear
> That my poor beauty had purloin'd his eyes,
> And when the judge is rob'd, the prisoner dies."

The next day, she sent messengers to call her husband and her father. They hastened to her at once, the former bringing with him Brutus, who was to be the leader in liberating Rome from the infamous race of Tarquin. When Lucretia had told her story, she made her relatives first swear that the criminal should not go unpunished. To this they savagely pledged themselves; but they tried to console her with the fact that, her mind being pure, she had incurred no guilt. Lucretia replied: "It remains for you to see to what is due to Tarquin. As for me, though I acquit myself of guilt, from punishment I do not discharge myself; nor shall any Roman woman survive her dishonor in pleading the example of Lucretia." Thus saying, she drew a knife which she had concealed in her garments, and plunged it into her heart.

Brutus, while they were all overcome with grief, gently drew the weapon from the wound; and holding it up, dripping as it was with Lucretia's life blood, he cried: "By this blood, most pure before the pollution of royal villainy, I swear, and I call you, O gods, to witness my oath, that I shall pursue Lucius Tarquin the Proud, his wicked wife, and all their race, with fire and sword, and all other means in my power; nor shall I ever suffer them

or any other to reign at Rome." In this oath Collatinus and the others joined. They carried the dead body of Lucretia to Rome, and succeeded in giving the populace the last incentive necessary to drive out the already hated Tarquins. Thus the misfortunes of noble Lucretia brought vengeance upon the wickedness of Tullia; for the historian says that "she fled from her house, both men and women cursing her wherever she went and invoking on her the Furies, the avengers of parents."

What portion of these stories of the women of legendary Rome may be accepted as fact, and what must be relegated to the realm of fiction, it is not within the capacity of research to ascertain. Probably we shall not be far wrong if we consider these legends as moralizings founded on facts. Tullia represented to the Romans all the viciousness against which women were warned; in Lucretia, there were accumulated all the virtues to which a woman was taught to aspire. They were pictorial moral discourses; and, just as the moral character of a modern age might be discovered from the sermons of the period, so these legends represent what was lowest and highest in the ethical conceptions of earliest Rome.

Chapter II

Noble Matrons of the Republic

II

NOBLE MATRONS OF THE REPUBLIC

AFTER the revolution, of which the tragedy of Lucretia was the traditional cause and which ended forever monarchical rule in Rome, our subject begins to emerge from the haziness of legendary narratives into the clearer light of veritable history. It now becomes possible for us to catch glimpses of the women of Rome, living and moving amid scenes that were real and under conditions which undoubtedly prevailed.

Roman society at the beginning of the Republic was most distinctly and rigidly classified. Not only were the people divided by the circumstances of birth into separate classes, but the law preordained for every person his precise station, his duties, his privileges, and his limitations. The citizen could no more go beyond these than he could transfer himself into another order of creation; for law, in Rome, was as absolute as it was rigid. Speaking generally, there were two orders, the patrician and the plebeian. A common opinion of the old writers was that out of the influx of adventurers who crowded to Rome at its founding Romulus chose one hundred Senators, their qualification being that they could name their fathers. Their children were called patricians. In the third century before Christ, when the plebeians had wrested many

privileges and offices from the unwilling higher class, Publius Decius, himself a plebeian, uses this theory of the origin of the patricians to great advantage. Contending in debate for the right of his order to serve in the priesthood, he said: "Have ye never heard that the first-created patricians were not men sent down from heaven, but such as could cite their fathers; that is, nothing more than freeborn? Well, I can cite my father; he was a consul; and my son will be able to cite a grandfather." This excessive pride which Roman citizens took in the fact that they could trace their paternity through more or less generations must not be understood as reflecting, in any way, upon the character of the early matrons; it arose simply from the fact that they could so surely name their ancestry as to eliminate possibility of descent from one of the common herd of unenfranchised inhabitants.

These latter were the plebeians. This class was made up of the descendants of the ancient people who of old had inhabited the country, ordinary foreigners who were attracted to the city, and the children of captives who had been given their liberty. At first, the plebeians enjoyed no rights whatever. They lived, it is true, under the shelter of the walls of the city, but on the outside. They possessed no right of suffrage, and were not allowed to interfere in any public affair. But they were free. They held property and engaged in handicrafts and in commerce. It soon came to pass that the increase of their number and their importance rendered their repression by the nobles more and more difficult. Under King Servius the plebeians became citizens; and, as is the case in every land, the internal history of Rome contains nothing more interesting than the indomitable and successful struggle of this lower class to wrest ever larger privileges from the tenacious rulers. It was not, however, until B.C. 444

that equality of rights had made sufficient progress for matrimonial alliances to be countenanced between patricians and plebeians. By the commencement of the Christian era all practical distinction between these two classes had vanished.

In addition to the two principal orders, there was that of the clients. These were in reality vassals, who preferred dependence on the great and wealthy to living independently in a precarious liberty. They were called by the names of their patrons and were numbered in the latter's tribe. By enactments of law, the patron was made responsible for the support and protection of his clients. In return, the patrician could depend upon his clients to fight his battles, support his cause, and prove themselves loyal retainers of his house in both good fortune and evil. The subservience of these clients, and the conscienceless zeal with which they furthered the designs, even the most wicked, of their masters, are well illustrated in the part which Marcus Claudius played in the persecution of Virginia by the decemvir Appius. Another dependent class was that of the slaves. At first the number of these was comparatively small; but as the conquering arms of Rome spread over the world her avaricious sway, the captives dragged in barbarous triumph to the city grew out of all proportion to the population. They enjoyed fewer rights and suffered under a régime more inhuman than in any other slaveholding nation in history.

That which distinguished one class from another in early Roman society had nothing whatever to do with the character of the occupation of the people comprising it. The noblest of the early patricians, as well as the commonest plebeians, tilled the soil with their own hands; nor did they disdain to engage in trade, or even in the letting of money on usury. Wealth was no more a

consideration than occupation in determining to which order a man or a woman belonged. In course of time, the plebeians, despite the patricians' unneglected privilege of practising robbery under due process of law, numbered many families of great wealth; but no man could therewith purchase entrance to the higher class. It was the blood line that marked these distinctions; it was ancestry alone that could give the patent of nobility. Nor is it surprising that a people who believed in the divine origin of some of their tribes should acknowledge superior rights as attached to a well-authenticated pedigree.

In most societies, the advantages of class are more markedly displayed in the life of the women than in that of the men. This does not appear to have been the case in the early times of the Roman Republic. In fact, it is difficult to see how difference in class greatly distinguished the patrician matron from her plebeian sister. Neither had any legal part whatever in State affairs or in any public functions, excepting those of a religious nature. The duties of each were confined to the home, and no woman was relieved from the obligation of personal and diligent industry. On the epitaphs of many noble women were praises for their chastity and their proficiency in spinning. Indeed, the evidence seems to indicate that any other qualities than these two, and that of fertility, were deprecated rather than admired by the Romans of this period. The only advantages which a patrician woman could possess were her natural pride in the privileges of her family and what honor was reflected upon her from the positions held by her male relatives. The term "Head of the Family" never had so tyrannical a meaning as in most ancient Rome. It was a place which a woman could not hold. The husband was all in all; no one else was recognized by law. Wife, children, clients, and slaves

were alike persons without will of their own. They were *mancipia,* under the hand of the father. He it was who answered for them to the State and who judged them. If a wife was accused of crime, she was committed to her husband for judgment. And this was the law even down to the time of Nero, when Pomponia Græcina, charged with embracing a foreign superstition, was "consigned to the adjudication of her husband." A man could even condemn his wife to death for certain offences, such as the violation of her marriage vows, or even for forging false keys in order to steal his wine. At her husband's death, the wife could not claim any of his property if he had bequeathed it to another, even though it were willed to an entire stranger. In this severely disciplined society, the woman never escaped from guardianship. She was looked upon as belonging to the family rather than to the State. The latter consisted only of men, to whom the women were merely necessary accessories. No one thought that a woman possessed any claim or right to independence of individuality. She was always under a master: her father, when she was a girl; her husband, when she was married; and her nearest male relative, if she became a widow. If she obtained any share in her father's property or in that of her husband, she could not transfer or bequeath it without the consent of her male guardian, unless she were a Vestal; nor could she marry without the same consent.

But, however dependent her position may have been, whether maid or matron, the Roman woman was always treated with reverence. The *stola,* the characteristic robe of the matron, corresponding to the toga of the male citizen, always ensured for its wearer respect, it being not merely an article of attire, but also an insignia which could only be retained by strict rectitude of life.

But it would be contrary to all human experience for us to imagine that a true picture of the life of a Roman woman can be constructed out of the laws by which it was supposed to be regulated. The personal equation is a quality which must always be reckoned with. And woman, in all ages, has ever shown a greater facility than has man in gaining her ends in spite of legal obstacles. In Rome, as elsewhere, and in the earliest times as well as in later ages, when woman's direct interference was vetoed by law, she found ample means by which to bring her influence to bear indirectly. Men were as susceptible and as subservient to feminine charms as they have ever been; and the mother's training was not without its powerful effect upon the sons, as we shall see in the instances of Coriolanus and the Gracchi. Nor must we believe, even though woman's life was so thoroughly disciplined by law, that, in the sternest days of the Republic, she was a docile creature entirely without mind or will of her own. That she did not always stay where she was placed is proved by the story of Clœlia swimming the Tiber. This noble maiden, with a number of others, having been given as hostages to Porsenna, King of the Etruscans, escaped and swam to Rome through the rushing dangers of the flood. And so far were the Romans from regarding this as an act of unpardonable insubordination, that they set up her statue with those of Brutus and Horatio Cocles, in order that her patriotism might be remembered by their women forever. The story abundantly shows that the women of Rome not only possessed spirit and hardihood, but that they were no less willing to endanger their lives for the sake of liberty than were their husbands and their brothers. Courage, endurance, and patriotism were the characteristics of the period; and it was toward the cultivation of these virtues that the

education of the Roman girls was directed, no less than that of the boys.

In the early years of the Republic, life was barbarously austere and contained no intimation of that softness which was to characterize the voluptuous ladies of the Empire. It is true that in the account of Virginia we read of her being accompanied by a nurse to a school situated in the Forum. It is hardly possible, however, to avoid the suspicion that these details were added by the Greek historians, who pictured the situation in accordance with the manners of their own country. There is nothing to warrant the inference that Roman maidens of the Republic were supposed to need the protection of a woman servant as an escort through the city. And, whatever the mention of a school may indicate, it is certain that there was little to be taught beyond the common duties of the household. Science was not studied at Rome; art was borrowed from foreigners; literature, in any true sense of the word, was not yet born.

The existence of these rugged Romans is, in almost every respect, a contrast with that of the Greeks of the time. In the Greek cities the highest pleasures of the mind were catered to in the great public festivals and by the exhibition of the noblest products of art. When Rome took a holiday, it was satisfied with boisterous games in which there were no pretence of cultivation and no sign of refinement. Art was precluded for the republican Roman by his intense utilitarianism. Everything with him was calculated to further the practical aims of his life, which included nothing beyond the affairs of the State, agriculture, and the cares of the family. Cato says: "When our fathers desired to praise a man, they called him a good farmer; this was the highest of eulogiums. Then men lived on their lands, in the rural tribes, which were the most honorable of all, and they came to Rome only on

market days or assembly days. In the villa—a miserable cabin made of mud, rafters, and branches—not a day, not a moment, was lost." Horace does not draw a more agreeable picture of ancient city manners. He tells us that "at Rome, for a long time a man knew no other pleasure and no other festival than to open his door at dawn, to explain the law to his clients, and to lay out his money on good security. They learned from their elders, and taught beginners, the art of increasing their savings." But when it is remembered that Cato was a sour and miserly Puritan, who adopted austerity as his pose, and that Horace was a poet, not untouched with cynicism, who lived in a society in which the charm of simple enjoyments was entirely forgotten, we may consider both pictures, though from differing causes, slightly overdrawn. Nevertheless they serve to indicate how circumscribed was the life of the wives of the early Romans.

Those strong-minded, intense, practical people were not, however, without their entertainments. Music, both vocal and instrumental, was cultivated. There were religious festivals, in which processions of boys and maidens sang pious hymns. We also learn from Cicero that it was the custom for the guests at a feast to sing the praises of their great men to the sound of the flute. It is easy for us to imagine a home scene in which Veturia, the mother of the youthful Cnæus Martius, tells over again to the inquiring boy those inspiring stories which he has heard chanted by his father's hearth and which are to prepare him to emulate heroic deeds at Corioli and earn for himself an honorable name.

But, habitually solemn and grave as were those old Romans, they were also much addicted to amusements of a coarse and grotesque nature. Even in their religious processions they included monstrous mechanical shapes,

with formidable teeth and huge jaws which, by their opening and closing, frightened the women and children, to the great enjoyment of the men. Hideous masks were also worn for the same purpose. In fact, so little refinement characterized the minds of the people of these times, that they could find entertainment in only the rudest and coarsest of jests. Farces, which were nothing more than the absurd antics and personal witticisms of buffoons, had been introduced from Atella. But the beginning of Roman drama may be dated from B. C. 364, when, on account of a pestilence which devastated the city, Etruscan actors were imported to institute scenic games in honor of the gods. The pestilence ended; and consequently the games, being regarded as the efficacious remedy, were retained. These games consisted of combined dances and songs, which were accompanied by appropriate but not altogether proper gestures. Later, there was instituted the floral festival, the purpose of which was to induce the goddess of spring to grant that all the flowers which decked the fields at the time of blossoming should be represented by fruit in the harvest. In these games, dancing girls appeared upon the stage; and we may draw our own conclusions from the fact that in the time of Cato the scene was regarded as too frivolous for the eyes of so grave a personage. But the most popular of all the early festivals was that of Anna Perenna, the goddess of life. In this, restraint was abandoned. To drink extravagantly, and to listen to a recitation of the mistakes of Mars in taking a hideous goddess for the beautiful Minerva, were regarded as works of piety. Young girls were required to sing this story, which was full of the coarsest allusions. But the ancients did not consider the requirements of modesty in the same light as we do. They did not esteem that innocence born of ignorance, in which modern times deem it

well for a maiden to be reared, as in any way essential to feminine goodness. Nothing was then thought lacking, so long as the wife maintained her fidelity. The ideal of chastity was the matron who, like Cornelia, steadfastly refused a second marriage.

The Romans of the Republic guarded the honor of their women with a determination inspired by instincts which were, at the same time, both religious and savage. Family bonds were sacred; and to desecrate these bonds was not only to injure the father of the family, but also to commit a crime against the Penates and the Lares, the guardian divinities of the community and the hearth. The tragical narrative of Virginia and Virginius, though possibly in some respects apocryphal, yet serves to indicate the temper of the time. Appius desired and determined to have the maiden. It is probable there was no attempt at seduction; doubtless for two reasons: in the first place, women were so fortified with extreme ideas of the worth of virtue that success would have been altogether unlikely; in the second place, no such design could be meditated apart from the consciousness that swift and popular vengeance would surely follow. No Roman of that time would dream of forcibly abducting a freeborn Roman woman. There was no course open for Appius in his evil purposes, except to proceed according to law. Where the law protected, its safeguarding was absolute; but where the law did not apply, the individual had no defence except of his own providing. There was no law for the protection of slaves; their persons, and indeed their lives, were in the absolute power of their masters, and could be disposed of like any other property. Women slaves were subject in every way to their owners, and chastity was a virtue which only concerned the wives and daughters of citizens. Men allowed themselves more liberty.

The sad story recorded by Livy is too lengthy, and too well known, to be repeated here in detail. But it is a typical Roman scene. Virginia is arrested by Marcus Claudius, a dependent of the house of Appius the decemvir. He carries her before the tribunal of Appius on the charge that she is the daughter of one of his slaves, and therefore herself a slave. The sympathizing people at once detect the flimsiness of the story, and Icilius, to whom the maiden has been betrothed, boldly accuses Appius of his real purpose in the matter. But the majesty of the law has been invoked, and the case must be heard; only the people irresistibly support Icilius in his opposition to the decree of Appius that the girl shall go to the claimant until the case is settled. The argument of the decemvir was that no woman could legally be without a guardian; and as the right of the absent Virginius to that position was in doubt, it therefore went to Marcus. This theory, if carried out, would have been sufficient to have satisfied his purpose; but the people would not have it so. Virginia was allowed to return home, Icilius making himself responsible for her appearance on the following day. We know the ending of this pitiful story: how Virginius, hastily summoned from the camp, appeared next morning in the Forum, with his daughter, both clad in mourning; how feelingly he harangued the people; how he pleaded with the insensible Appius: "To Icilius, and not to you, have I betrothed my daughter, and for matrimony, not for shame, have I brought her up." Though the tragedy was enacted more than twenty centuries ago, there is nothing foreign to our minds in the sentiments which impelled the fatal knife and were expressed in the farewell words: "Virginia, in this one way, the only one in my power, do I secure you your liberty." And thus again the blood of a noble woman

sacrificed to honor was the signal for the expulsion of tyranny.

It was not alone in the incitement of the populace to measures for her protection that the influence of woman was felt in matters of State. There were occasions when by her means calamities were averted, as well as times when civil strife was for her sake produced. The memory of the good service done for the city by Veturia, the mother, and Volumnia, the wife of Coriolanus, was never allowed to fade.

In the history of this brave and haughty warrior we have a picture of Roman political life. Rough politics they were; rock-faced episodes, befitting the character of the times, in which men knew nothing of *finesse,* and when appeal was made directly from reason to brute force and to the natural feelings of men. Perhaps it would be bordering on literary impiety to think that Shakespeare, in his Coriolanus, has not given the best interpretation possible of this fragment from the old Republic; but it is not one of his greatest pieces, because the material is lacking in those human qualities which are necessary to arouse profound interest. It is a drama with but one motive—filial respect. Yet the most is made of this; and the great dramatist has succeeded in vivifying the principal characters. In the portrayal of the mother of Coriolanus we see a matron who is worthy of such a son; the wife's part is that of passive resignation to the will of stronger spirits. Mrs. Jameson, in her *Characteristics of Women,* says: "In Volumnia, Shakespeare has given us the portrait of a Roman matron, conceived in the true antique spirit, and finished in every part. Although Coriolanus is the hero of the play, yet much of the interest of the action and the final catastrophe turn upon the character of his mother, and the power she exercised over his

mind, by which, according to the story, 'she saved Rome and lost her son.' Her lofty patriotism, her patrician haughtiness, her maternal pride, her eloquence, and her towering spirit, are exhibited with the utmost power of effect; yet the truth of female nature is beautifully preserved, and the portrait, with all its vigor, is without harshness." We may well believe that Veturia—whom, following Plutarch, Shakespeare calls Volumnia—was a woman who could say: "When yet he was tender-bodied, and the only son of my womb . . . I was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him, whence he returned, his brows bound with oak." And when the wife tremblingly inquires: "But had he died in the business, madam—what then?" it was in the mother to reply: "Then, his good report should have been my son." This is in accord with the Greek historian's statement that Coriolanus fought heroically, not only for glory and the passion of battle, but to win the meed of praise from his mother.

The action in the story of Veturia and her son is entirely political. The balance of power between the patricians and the plebeians was very narrow, especially when hardship aroused the latter to make inquiry into the claims of the former. A famine was more than sufficient to incite the lower order to threaten the privileges of the upper class; and Rome was at that time suffering from a scarcity of corn. The populace was not entirely convinced by Menenius's parable that the whole duty of the patrician order consisted in being the belly of the State organism. The people clamored; their tribunes saw in this an opportunity to gain increased powers; the Senators were inclined to be subservient. But the haughty spirit of Coriolanus would yield nothing of the ancient privileges. For his mother's sake, he sought the consulship;

nevertheless, he angered the commons, though he could not gain the office without their suffrages. The stress became so great that his patrician friends could not prevent his exile. He left Rome, only to return to wreak vengeance at the head of a Volscian army. This enemy being already a menace to Rome, the defection of the great leader to their ranks placed the disordered city at their mercy. Then it was that the Romans remembered that though women were incapacitated for political action and were unable to fight, yet they were powerful factors in the appeal to those feelings of the human heart whence flow justice and pity. The arguments of ambassadors and the behests of the priests had not availed; the authorities were constrained to adventure what might be effected by the tears of the women for whom alone, of all that was Roman, Coriolanus retained any regard. His mother and his wife were implored to make the last appeal. This plan had come by inspiration into the mind of Valeria, sister of the great Publicola, as she was praying with the other matrons in the temple of Jupiter. Veturia and Volumnia, leading the two sons of Coriolanus, went forth to the Volscian camp. As they drew near, Coriolanus, though resolved to remain obdurate, showed himself not lacking in filial respect; he advanced to meet them, ordering the fasces to be lowered in the presence of his mother. The Roman historians clothe Veturia with noble dignity as she makes her appeal. "Before I receive your embrace, let me know if I have come to an enemy or to a son; whether I am in your camp a captive or a mother. Has length of life and a hapless old age reserved me for this—to behold you an exile and an enemy? . . . So then, had I not been a mother, Rome would not be besieged; had I not a son, I might have died free in a free country." The spirit of this is truly Roman. Even the women were trained to

force the claims of blood and the natural affections into a place secondary to the duty of loyalty to the State. This appeal, joined with the embraces of his wife and the lamentations of the other matrons, prevailed over the anger of Coriolanus; and again Rome was saved by the Roman women. As a reward, a monumental temple was erected by the men of the city, and dedicated to Female Fortune.

It was not alone as peacemakers that the Roman matrons served the public interests of the city. On more than one occasion the treasury was rendered efficient by means of their generous contributions. More than once the golden ornaments of the wives became auxiliary to the iron arms of their husbands, and in one instance they accomplished that which the latter could not achieve. When the Gauls burned the city, and were only turned from the citadel by the payment of one thousand pounds of gold, with the sword of Brennus thrown on the Gallic side of the scale to insure good weight, the amount could not have been raised but for the self-sacrifice of the matrons. In gratitude for this, the Conscript Fathers voted that thenceforth funeral orations might be made for women. The gold was afterward repaid to the women out of Etrurian plunder. Again, when, in accordance with the vow of Camillus, a tribute was to be presented to Apollo, the matrons brought what they possessed of the precious metal, it was especially honored by being made into a golden bowl, which was carried to Delphos. On this occasion also they were rewarded; for the Senate conferred on them the privilege of riding to public worship and to the games in covered chariots, and on other errands in open carriages. The historian introduces this latter information with "they say"; whether or not, previous to this, the Roman ladies had been obliged to walk is left to be surmised without further evidence.

Some idea of what those golden ornaments were may be gathered from the account of a voluntary contribution which was made in Rome at a later period. Funds were required to equip a fleet against Philip of Macedon, the ally of Hannibal. Lævinus the consul, urging upon his fellow Senators the duty to set an example of public generosity, says: "Let us bring into the treasury to-morrow all our gold, silver, and coined brass, each reserving rings for himself, his wife and children, and a bulla for his son; and he who has a wife or daughters, an ounce weight of gold for each. Let those who have sat in a curule chair have the ornaments of a horse, and a pound weight of silver, that they may have a salt-cellar, and a dish for the service of the gods . . ." Notwithstanding the fact that, in response to this appeal, the needs of the fleet were abundantly provided for, the indication is that at this period, about B. C. 280, the decorative tastes of the Roman ladies had in no wise acquired that luxuriousness with which they afterward became characterized. There was no ornament so common as the ring, the place of which, in these early times when only one was worn, was the third finger of the left hand. It was used for the purpose of sealing letters and papers, and long before the end of the Republic the custom arose of setting rings with precious stones. Indeed, the people of the early Republic were not unacquainted with most exquisite work of the goldsmiths' art; but there was still prevalent that consciousness of the surpassing value of personal excellences which could afford to be independent of outward adornment, and of which Cornelia's reference to her sons as her jewels was a surviving echo.

But the times were soon to change. Hitherto we have seen the Roman matrons living the simple, diligent, unsophisticated lives of women who were fitting mates for

men who held to the plow for support, but dared not let drop the sword. Until then, Rome had been nothing but a city struggling for existence—sometimes a precarious existence. Instances there were when her fortunes waned almost to the vanishing point; when the tide of progress seemed to hang at the ebb. The god of victory, though honored as the tutelary deity of Rome, was frequently partial to her Italian neighbors; her walls were entered and her houses razed by the barbarian Gauls; and once she was at the point of being deserted by her citizens, the majority of whom could hardly be restrained by the ideals of religion from removing the State and the Capitol to Veii. Yet her star of empire persisted and, despite temporary eclipses, remained in the ascendant.

How did those centuries of varying civic fortune affect the status of the women? They were, by the necessities of their circumstances, trained to endure hardship. The temple of Janus was never closed, for warfare was unceasing; and it was usual for the widow's wailing death dirge to be embittered by the fact that the husband had been slain in his strength and prime. Slavery and outrage, the concomitants of barbarous warfare, were always included within the possibilities of a Roman matron's fate. Under such circumstances civilization necessarily advanced slowly; it is only as life and liberty and leisure are secured that existence can acquire the social graces. Hence the probability is that, during the first two and a half centuries of the Republic,—that is, until Rome was fully launched upon her career of conquest,—the position and the habits and manner of life of the women did not greatly change. It is true that there was a continuous internal development of the State; but this manifested itself in an accentuation of those laws which reveal the hardness of the old Roman character, rather than in any tendency

toward the easement of the individual lives of the citizens. Never has personal privilege been so completely subjugated to State prerogative. The laws, which were rigidly—even slavishly—interpreted according to the letter and never according to the spirit, considered the individual from the standpoint of his value to the State, and rarely from that of his own rights. The woman's value to the State was entirely submerged in that of her husband. Therefore, we find that it was only with the greatest difficulty that edicts granting privileges to woman could be passed, unless it were in payment for some special act of loyalty on her part to the State. Hard and inflexible in their ideas of life were those old Romans, practical and unsentimental in their relations with each other, narrow in their conceptions, proud to arrogance of their State, and reverencing only their institutions.

But in course of time they broke through their insularity with the force of their own arms. Victorious contact with other States gave them a larger acquaintance with the fruits of civilization, and the spoils of conquest afforded them the means to enjoy it. Hence, during the latter half of the republican period we see life in Rome rapidly undergoing a change. As typical of this new state of things, as it affected the character, status, and condition of women, there is only one woman whom we need to select. In Cornelia, the daughter of Scipio Africanus and the wife of Sempronius Gracchus, is found the ideal of Roman femininity of that day. She was in every way worthy of her patrician ancestry, which had produced a greater number of eminent men than any other family, twenty-one consulships being held by the Cornelii in eighty-six years. Cornelia lived in a Rome which we can understand and appreciate; we begin to recognize social features upon which the imagination can lay hold

and from them piece together some idea of the reality. Hitherto the data has been too foreign and too meagre for any great success in this; but when we read of Cornelia providing herself with a country house, riding to public worship, listening to the gossip of her friends respecting each other's jewelry, and interesting herself in Greek literature, we discover that the main features of a Roman matron's life were not essentially dissimilar from those which characterize polite feminine society in our own time. Indeed, there is more to evoke our sympathetic appreciation in the Rome of B. C. 150 than in the Europe of A. D. 1000 or in the Asiatic civilizations of to-day. We feel more at home in the patrician villas than in the mediæval castles; just as we find more that is applicable to modern life in the Roman poets than we do in the bards of chivalry. In studying the period when the ancient civilization of Italy was at its best, we discover habits of thought, bits of life, and social customs, which really startle us with their similitude to those to which we ourselves are accustomed.

The city, in the time of Cornelia, showed few outward signs of the magnificence it was to acquire under the emperors. The houses were mostly of brick, though domestic architecture had become quite ambitious in its character, Cornelia herself having built, as has been said, a very expensive villa at Misenum; those of the wealthy were filled with costly furniture and precious works of art, which the Romans first learned to admire in the countries which they subdued; and having acquired a taste for beautiful things, they made no scruple of appropriating them. Rome had now grown wealthy with the spoils of her extensive victories, and, as always comes to pass with the advent of riches, there had been brought about a great differentiation in the condition of the population. Polybius

gives us a picture of the extravagant style in which Æmilia, the mother of Cornelia, appeared in public. "When she left home to go to the temple," says he, "she seated herself in a glittering chariot, herself attired with extreme luxury. Before her were carried with solemn ceremony the vases of gold and silver required for the sacrifice, and a numerous train of slaves and servants accompanied her." And this notwithstanding the Oppian law, which limited matrons to a half-ounce of gold on their wearing apparel and prohibited them from riding in carriages in the city, and which had not yet been repealed. As this modish lady passed through the streets of Rome with her brilliant retinue, exciting the envy of other matrons, and bestowing gracious recognition upon white-robed, stately patricians, she must have beheld as many signs of abject, suffering poverty as are prevalent in our own great cities. By this time, the plebeian order had been raised to equal legal privilege with the patrician, and society had now come to be divided into the enormously rich and the extremely poor. The former rendered their position secure by means of extortion in the provinces; the condition of the latter was made hopeless by the fact that all labor was performed by slaves. A state of things unknown to the old times was now prevalent in Rome: men and women were idle, willingly or perforce, according to their circumstances.

The position of women had also changed. They were now beginning to make a stand for their rights—a thing undreamed of in the old days. The father of the family was no longer allowed to execute his arbitrary power entirely unquestioned. Livy narrates an incident which illustrates this development and bears interestingly upon the character of Æmilia and the history of Cornelia. He relates that "the Senators, happening to sup one day in the Capitol, rose up together and requested of Africanus, before

the company departed, to betroth his daughter to Gracchus; the contract was accordingly executed in due form, in the presence of this assembly. Scipio, on his return home, told his wife Æmilia that he had concluded a match for her younger daughter. She, feeling her female pride hurt, expressed some resentment at not having been consulted in the disposal of their common child, adding that, even were he giving her to Tiberius Gracchus, her mother ought not to be kept in ignorance of his intention; to which Scipio, rejoiced that her judgment concurred so entirely with his own, replied that she was betrothed to that very man."

It has been well said that the words which Plautus puts into the mouth of Alcmena may be applied to the character of Cornelia, who was thus bestowed by her great father upon a no less worthy man: "My dower is chastity, modesty, and the fear of the gods; it is love to my kindred; it is to be submissive to my husband, kind toward good people, helpful to the brave." She also received a *dot,* an accompaniment of marriage which was beginning to be highly considered among the matrons of Rome as of more practical value than the above-mentioned moral qualities. It consisted of fifty talents of gold. But the time had not yet arrived when the riches of virtue and goodness were entirely unappreciated; there were still matrons who could enter, with faces neither brazen nor abashed, the temple erected to chastity; and upon the tombs of many of them might have been truthfully inscribed, as upon that of Claudia: *Gentle in words, graceful in manner, she loved her husband devotedly; she kept her house, she spun wool.* Among these chaste matrons Cornelia excelled; her fame remains as that of the highest type of the pure-principled, noble-minded, cultured Roman matron. She lived in entire sympathy with her husband; and we may well believe that it was partly owing to her influence that

the generous Sempronius Gracchus found it in himself to command an army enlisted from among the slaves, and to emancipate them upon the battlefield as a reward for the bravery which his leadership incited.

Plutarch, in his lives of the sons of Gracchus, repeats a story which, though characterized by the superstitions of the times, indicates in what estimation Cornelia was held by her husband and all who knew her. It relates that Gracchus once found in his bed chamber a couple of snakes, and that the soothsayers, being consulted concerning the prodigy, advised that he should neither kill them both nor let them both escape; adding that if the male serpent were killed, Gracchus would die, and, if the female, Cornelia would perish. Therefore, as he extremely loved his wife, he thought that it was much more his part, who was an old man, to die than it was hers, who as yet was but a young woman; so he killed the male serpent and let the female escape. Soon after this, he died, leaving his wife and the twelve children which she had borne to him. "Cornelia, taking upon herself all the care of the household and the education of her children, approved herself so discreet a matron, so affectionate a mother, and so constant and noble-spirited a widow, that Tiberius seemed to all men to have done nothing unreasonable in choosing to die for such a woman; who, when King Ptolemy himself proffered her his crown and would have married her, refused it, and chose rather to live a widow. In this state she continued, and lost all her children, except one daughter, who was married to Scipio the Younger, and two sons, Tiberius and Caius." The daughter, Sempronia, seems to have been in every respect unlike her mother. Unattractive and childless, she neither loved nor was loved by her husband; and, indeed, suspicion was cast upon her of having brought about his death.

Cornelia was well equipped to undertake the education of her children. What is told of her indicates a woman who was alert to advance with all that was progressive in her time. The spirit of literature had but recently attained its reincarnation, and that for the first time upon Roman soil. It was begotten, as it was again fifteen centuries later, by the immortal genius of Greek poesy. The Romans conquered Greece physically; but Hellenic learning subjugated Roman ideas. The Scipios were the ardent supporters of Greek culture; and in this, as in all other respects, Cornelia took a foremost position among the representatives of her gifted family.

She provided for her children the most erudite of Greek masters, and spared no efforts in training their minds in the love of all that was graceful and cultured. In the justly renowned eloquence of her sons, there was recognized a gift which they inherited from their mother, as was testified by Cicero, who had seen her letters. She possessed the ability and also the courage to incite them to noble deeds for their country. It was probably not so much ambition for herself as for them which caused her to reproach her sons with the fact that she was still known as the widow of Scipio and not as the Mother of the Gracchi. But they lost no time in earning for her, both on account of their deeds on the battlefield and by their devotion to the civil affairs of the State, the distinction of this latter title.

The Roman Republic had so far degenerated as to submit to be governed by an oligarchy consisting of a few proud and wealthy families—the worst of all forms of government. The Senators were flagrantly using their power to accumulate enormous riches and to monopolize the land by seizing upon the public domain. Middle-class independence was rapidly diminishing, and the growing

masses of the people were oppressed by a poverty from which they had no means of freeing themselves. The Gracchi sought to relieve these evils by passing laws limiting the amount of land which might be held by one person, and offsetting the power of the nobility by securing the economic independence of the people. The Gracchi were reformers; and they each in turn attained to dictatorial power. But though they secured the enactment of their measures, they could not put them into effect; and in the end,—as is frequently the case with reformers,—because they were far-sighted enough to see evil in that which the majority of the rulers considered good, there was nothing for them but martyrdom. This they suffered in turn: Caius taking up the work where Tiberius was compelled, by assassination, to relinquish it.

The parting of Caius from his wife on the morning of his own death is a scene from a heroic tragedy. He could not be persuaded to arm himself, with the exception of a small dagger underneath his toga. As he was going out, Licinia stopped him at the threshold, holding him by one hand and their little son by the other. She pleaded that he would not expose himself to the murderers of his brother. "Had your brother," she urged, "fallen before Numantia, the enemy would have given back what then had remained of Tiberius; but such is my hard fate, that I probably must be a suppliant to the floods or the waves, that they would somewhere restore to me your relics. For since Tiberius was not spared, what trust can we place either in the laws or in the gods?" But Caius, gently withdrawing himself from her embraces, departed; and Licinia, falling in a faint, was carried as though dead into the house of her brother Crassus.

Cornelia bore the death of her two sons with her characteristic nobility of mind. She removed to her seaside

home at Cape Misenum; and there she surrounded herself with learned men, and especially delighted in entertaining the exponents of Greek literature. She was held in the highest esteem by all; and her friends desired no greater privilege than to listen to her reminiscences of her father, Scipio Africanus. She would proudly add: "The grandsons of that great man were my children. They perished in the temple and grove sacred to the gods. They have the tombs that their virtues merited, for they sacrificed their lives to the noblest of aims,—the desire to promote the welfare of the people." Such was Cornelia; and she was the noblest of the matrons of the Republic. No greater thing can be said of her than that she gloried most in the reflected honor which came upon her as being the mother of the Gracchi; yet she has been deservedly given a high place among the great and good women of all time.

Chapter III

Woman's Part in Religion

III

WOMAN'S PART IN RELIGION

IN these modern times and in Christian countries, we are accustomed to seeing religious matters take a more prominent place in the life of the women than in that of the men. This is because our form of religion concerns itself more with the emotions and with those subjects which appeal to sentiment than it does with the practical affairs of life. Wherever the details or the appliances of worship are brought into intimate relation with the common occupations in which a people are engaged, it at once becomes less peculiarly the province of women. For instance, where there is union between Church and State, according to the extent to which that union exists, and owing to the fact that women are to a large extent shut out of the management of State affairs, the Church more particularly engages the attention of the male portion of the population. Also, where, as in Asia, an undertaking is supposed to be liable to miscarriage unless entered into conformably with the prevailing religious rites, men are less likely to be negligent in paying their respects to the gods. When, as in mediæval Europe, every phase of human activity was under the supervision of the Church, the arts finding in it a large proportion of their subject matter, and

every transaction needing its sanction, woman's influence in religion was much less predominant than it now is. All of which goes to show that there is less of material self-seeking in feminine worship than in that of men.

Never was the intimate relation between the material and the spiritual more strongly accentuated than in ancient Rome. The acts of the gods and goddesses were a part of the lives of the people. Nothing existed or came to pass in State, society, or private life without its cause being attributed to the supernatural. The consequence was that every Roman citizen looked upon the worship of his deities as a practical duty, the neglect of which entailed practical consequences. At the same time, the possession by woman of an important place in religion was assured, not only by her nature, but also by the fact that reverence for the supernatural was conjoined with every phase of life. Worship was no less a private interest than a public affair. It entered into everything. Consequently, a woman's religious duties and privileges were exactly coextensive with the activities of her life. According to Roman theology, the supernatural world was the precise counterpart of the natural world. Everything had its special deity. There were the powerful gods and goddesses who presided over the national interests, over war and peace, prosperity and chastisement, counsel and justice; there were the divinities who were to be depended upon for the natural phenomena, the seasons, the weather, germination, and harvest; there were also minor spirits upon whose pleasure depended the success of every human action.

According to the Roman conception, nothing took place without the assistance of some special divinity whose province it was to further that particular form of activity. It is said that Varro, at the close of the era of the Republic,

was able to enumerate thirty thousand of these gods and goddesses. Roman life, public and private, was never for a moment dissociated from religion. The Senate met for deliberation in the temple of Jupiter; an important part of the general's duty on the battlefield was to invoke the god of war; the infliction of punishment on wrong-doers was a sacrifice to offended deity; all public entertainments were held in honor of the gods; all the ordered events in an individual's life were religious ceremonies; for even a family meal was not supposed to be partaken of without a portion being set apart for the household gods; and always on entering a house reverence was first made to the Lares. Hence it necessarily followed that the part woman took in religion was commensurate with her part in Roman life. It can hardly be said that her position in this respect was a subordinate one. If Mars, the god of battle, was the central object of Roman worship, an equal devotion was paid to Vesta at the communal hearth which symbolized the existence and the well-being of the city; and as it was more particularly the province of men to invoke the warlike deity, so from among the women, who were the home-keepers, were selected the honored guardians of the sacred fire. It is also important to observe another fact. Though there were priests appointed to conduct the ceremonies of public worship, they were in no sense intermediaries. Every suppliant addressed himself directly to the divinity. He might consider it to his advantage to consult the professional men, who were skilled in the knowledge of how most persuasively to approach the gods; but the act of intercession was each person's own affair, and did not need the intervention of a proxy. Therefore, the women were as free to address the gods as were the men; and, in fact, in the many matters which concerned their sex particularly, and in

other things in which it seemed fitting, they alone could properly do so.

Bespeaking the favor of a particular deity consisted in paying that god more or less extra attention; generally it was a very simple process. There is in existence a painting, found at Rome, which represents two women offering incense to Mars, their husbands probably being absent with the army. Each of these matrons has brought a portable altar, and into the rising flames, before a small figure of the deity, they are dropping the fragrant oblation. This sacrifice may have taken place in the open air; probably in the Forum. Thus easy was it for women to pay their devotions and to invoke protection for those in whose welfare they were interested. The practical Romans looked upon their relations to the deities as partaking somewhat of the nature of commerce; for a certain amount of attention they were justified in expecting a corresponding amount of protection. They even practised what might truly be called pious frauds upon the powers whom they worshipped. In certain cases, it seemed to them that, inasmuch as the gods could not make use of the reality, an inexpensive substitute might well take its place. For instance, it is a relief to know that the yearly sacrifice of men which the Vestals made to Father Tiber from the Sublician Bridge had nothing in it more human than representations of men made out of osiers; but when we read of the heads of poppies and even onions being presented to Jupiter, in order that he might practise his thunderbolts upon them, instead of upon the heads of the citizens, the instinct of self-preservation is more apparent than is the reasoning faculty which they attributed to the god. The Romans studied economy in their religion. Their meat offerings constituted the family meal; and a pig seemed to them the more proper object to sacrifice to the

gods, in that its flesh was a favorite article of diet with themselves.

In many instances, the Romans committed, as they believed, the fortunes of the State to the religious zeal of the women. There were several divine protectresses whose worship was the exclusive duty of the gentler sex. The most important of all was Vesta; to permit her sacred flame to expire was one of the greatest of public calamities. The fact that these offices held by women were looked upon by the Romans as of exceeding importance could but reflect a dignity upon womanhood and enhance the respect in which the sex was held. In fact, though women held no recognized place in civil and State affairs, in religion they attained much nearer to equal rights with the men. If a man were a priest, his wife was a priestess. So firmly did women assert the authority gained through possession of religious office, that in the reign of Tiberius it was deemed necessary to pass a law that in things sacred the priestess of Jupiter should be subject to her husband.

One of the most interesting features of Roman religion was the worship of Vesta and the institution of an order of virgins devoted to her service. Nothing more clearly illustrates than this the fact that Roman religion was suggested by racial customs. A study of the earliest history of the Aryan race shows that during the migrations of the tribes it would naturally fall to the duty of the young girls to kindle the camp fire whenever their people stopped to rest; and as the primitive method of procuring fire by rubbing together dry sticks rendered this no easy matter, it was important to preserve the flame when once it was produced. Then, too, the camp fire signified much; it stood for comfort, sustenance, health, family, and social community; it was either the source or the representation of the best in primeval life. The bright flame was to the

tribesmen a beneficent deity, a goddess, of course; for by it the work of women was especially furthered—a chastity-loving goddess, for what so pure as fire? Hence the idea that virgins, such as those who enkindle the useful flame, should attend the communal hearth consecrated to the honor of the divinity and symbolical of the life of the tribe.

Numa Pompilius, the second of Rome's legendary kings, is said, as already mentioned, to have instituted the college of the Vestal Virgins and to have formulated the rules of the life to which they were bound. It seems probable, however, that the order was more ancient than even the city itself; reaching back, as has been indicated, to the prehistoric time when the ancestors of the Latin tribes migrated from the common Aryan home. At first the Roman Vestals were four in number, two for each of the original Roman tribes, the Ramnes and the Tities; after the addition of the Luceres, the number was increased to six. Maidens were made Vestals when between six and ten years of age. Whenever a vacancy occurred, the chief pontiff chose twenty girls from the patrician order, care being taken to select only those who were in perfect health, free from the least physical blemish, and showing promise of future beauty. Then the casting of lots was resorted to, in order that the goddess herself might have an opportunity to designate which of the number should be selected as her priestess. The maiden to whom fell this fortune gave her right hand to the pontiff, who said: "I take thee; thou shalt be priestess of Vesta, and shalt perform the sacred rites for the safety of the Roman people." Then the girl was conducted to the house of the sacred virgins, who cut off her hair and clothed her in the white robes of the order. The ceremony in many respects corresponded to that of the modern nun in taking the veil. The term of consecration was thirty years, thus

giving the votaries ten years in which to learn their duties, ten for the practice of them as serving members, and ten in which they governed the order and enjoyed the highest honors in its gift. After thirty years, the Vestals were at liberty to return to their families, or to marry, if they so desired; but advantage was rarely taken of this permission, they preferring the service of the goddess to whom they had vowed their virginity.

The principal duty of the Vestals was to preserve the fire which burned day and night on the altar of their divinity. If through rare mischance it became extinguished, it was the rule that the sacred flame might only be rekindled by rubbing together pieces of wood from a particular tree which was resorted to with great and solemn ceremony. Later, however, there was adopted the method of concentrating the rays of the sun in a vase of burnished metal. The Vestals had other important functions, chief of which were the offering of certain sacrifices and the protection of records and important documents as well as of the venerable relics of the city. These were preserved in the most secret part of the temple; and among them were the fetiches which were said to have been brought to Troy by Dardanus, and from Troy to Italy by Æneas. These were believed by the Romans to be the guaranties for the existence of the Empire. No one but the Chief Vestal was permitted to enter the inner sanctuary, where they were kept. It is no wonder that, as the functions committed to their charge were believed to be fraught with such tremendous import to the State, to these priestesses was paid a respect as great if not greater than any Roman official might claim. They were most carefully guarded against insult or offence, anyone offering such being punished with death. Whenever a Vestal appeared in public, she was preceded by a lictor, before whom everyone

made way, even the highest officer of the State. The fasces were always lowered in her presence. She was free from that guardianship by male relatives to which all other Roman women were subject. Consequently, a Vestal not only could receive legacies, but also enjoyed an untrammelled right in the disposal of her property. In a court of justice she could make a deposition without being required to take the oath. At all public games and religious banquets she had the seat of honor. If a criminal, even on the way to execution, met her by accident in the street, he was immediately set free.

On the other hand, if their privileges were great, the discipline was severe. If they transgressed the minor rules of the order, chastisement was administered by the Chief Vestal. If she herself were the offender, or if the offence were something of so serious a nature as permitting the extinction of the sacred fire, the delinquent maiden was stripped and then scourged by the chief pontiff in the gloom of a darkened room. If a Vestal broke her vow of chastity, a horrible death awaited her. In a place called *campus sceleratus*—the accursed field—an underground chamber was prepared. This chamber was carefully furnished with a bed, a lamp, a small quantity of oil, bread, water, and milk. The victim was placed upon a bier and borne with funeral pomp to the place of doom. There, in the presence of the multitude, after the priest had uttered certain prayers, the Vestal descended into her living tomb. The vault was quickly covered, and then roofed with brick; the earth was replaced and carefully levelled; thus all traces of the death chamber were obliterated, and the unfortunate victim was left to her fate. The witnesses of the execution turned away from the spot in the belief that the death of the criminal would avert dire evils from themselves and their families.

Though it may be they are not sufficiently well attested to preclude the doubt that the innocent were sometimes sacrificed, it is interesting to note that there are occasions on record when Vesta came to the rescue of her servants. Dionysius relates how, when Æmilia was about to be punished for intrusting the sacred fire to a novice, who let it go out, the Vestal, having first prayed to the goddess, tore a strip from her robe and cast it upon the ashes, when the fire immediately blazed up. Tuccia, who was accused of violating her vow of continence, appealed to the goddess and said: "O Vesta, if I have ever approached thee with clean hands, grant me a sign to prove my innocence." Then, as though by inspiration, she took a sieve, and going to the Tiber brought it back full of water, thus showing that miracles are never lacking in any religion when its votaries in after ages have sufficient faith to believe in them. This occurrence was made the subject of the engraving on the seal of the order, a specimen of which has been preserved to the present time. In the fourth century before Christ, Postumia was charged with a like offence. She succeeded in proving her innocence without summoning the gods as witnesses; but the chief pontiff, "by the instruction of the college, commanded her to refrain from indiscreet mirth, and to dress with more regard to sanctity than elegance."

The temple of Vesta stood at the east end of the Forum, the site being well authenticated by the ruins which remain. Tradition held that the first temple was built by Numa; this was destroyed in B.C. 390, when the city was burned by the Gauls. It was afterward rebuilt no less than four times, always on the exact site, the same form and size being adhered to. It was small and circular in shape, the domed roof being supported on columns which surrounded the inner wall. In the interior was the

low, round altar where burned continually the sacred fire, to the care of which the virgin priestesses were devoted. The house in which the Vestals resided stood behind the temple, toward the Palatine hill. A few years ago, excavations were made in the accumulated soil at the foot of the hill, and a rich reward was gained in the discovery of this house, in a remarkably fine state of preservation. It has the large atrium, common to ancient Roman houses, and into which the rooms open from all sides. The stairs remain, and many of the rooms on the upper floor are still intact. That the Vestals lived in luxurious style is attested by the richness of the decorations and by the remains of bathrooms and hot-air flues. The latter were used for heating Roman buildings from a furnace, very much in the same manner as the method to which we are accustomed. That which interests us far more than anything else about this house, however, is the fact that there were found in it a large number of statues representing the Vestals themselves. Each statue originally stood upon a pedestal bearing the name and a dedicatory inscription. Presumably, the faces and the figures do not flatter the sacred maidens, for they are neither beautiful nor graceful; but they give us their names, and, what is perhaps of still greater interest, they represent the Vestal dress. This consisted of a long gown, with a cord around the waist, knotted in front. Over this there is a large mantle, so arranged as to be drawn over the head like a hood; this falls in great folds, with heavy tassels at the corners. Around the head is the characteristic diadem-like band of wool which always distinguished the Vestals, and was to them what the veil is to a nun. The feet are covered with boots of some soft material. The inscriptions on the pedestals are dated, the latest date being that of A. D. 364. This pedestal is particularly interesting because of the fact that the

Vestal's name has been defaced, not, however, by an act of purposeless vandalism. It was evidently done with deliberate intent to obliterate the name; for the initial "C" has been left, in order that, though she were disowned, the identity of the offending virgin might not be forgotten. She was Claudia, who became a convert to the Christian faith.

The glorification of virginity in the Vestal order must have helped to sustain the high moral tone which prevailed among the women of early Rome. They constantly beheld, in the very centre of the civic life, a group of maidens who held a position of surpassing honor as a reward for absolute purity of character. Although celibacy was not esteemed for its own sake, nor in any instance save that of the votaries of Vesta and Ceres, in them it could but be effective as an example of virtue. And when to the sanctity essential to the office was added the personal reputation of those virgins whose fame for holiness was augmented by many years of devotion, the influence must have been all in favor of good morals. What need, it may pertinently be asked, had the Roman women to worship at the shrine of the goddess of chastity, when they had Occia, who, as Tacitus informs us, presided over the Vestals for fifty-seven years with the greatest sanctity? That such an example was not more effective than it really was must be attributed to the fact that the maids and matrons of Rome considered, as is quite consistent with human wont in all times, that the supererogatory virtue of the Vestals atoned for any deficiencies in their own. It may be that this attribution of a vicarious character thereto partly accounts for the high valuation set upon Vestal virginity. And though a time came when an untarnished reputation was contentedly dispensed with elsewhere, it was still rigidly demanded in the house of Vesta.

Yet, despite all this care, the order was not entirely immune from the counteracting influence of the times. As Roman morals relaxed, it became a less infrequent thing for scandals derogatory to the reputation of the Vestals to be whispered through the city. Toward the close of the Republic, an intrigue with one of these maidens was considered by the young nobility as all the more attractive on account of the difficulty and danger accompanying it; and there is evidence to support the belief that the attempt was not always unsuccessful. When Rome became infected with the turpitude which marked its decadence, the college of Vesta did not escape. There were occasions, however, down to the latest pagan times, when the priestesses were violently brought to a consciousness of the requirements of their office; as when Domitian severely punished them for delinquencies which, strange to say, had been overlooked by Vespasian and Titus.

Another cult closely affecting the feminine portion of Roman society was the worship of Ceres, one of the twelve great deities of the Capitol. She was the goddess of corn and the harvest, the mythical daughter of Saturn and Vesta, and, like her divine mother, demanded a virgin priestess; and the women who were devoted to her service enjoyed privileges almost equal to those of the Vestals. The Romans paid her great adoration, and her festival, lasting eight days, was celebrated by the matrons every year during the month of April. They bore lighted torches, in commemoration of the myth which describes the goddess as lighting torches at the flames of Mount Ætna, to go in search of Proserpine, her daughter, who had been carried off by Pluto. It was required of all the matrons who took part in her mysteries that they should undergo an initiation; to attend the festival without first being initiated was punishable with death.

As the Roman women worshipped Vesta and Ceres, so they also paid reverence to Bona Dea, the good goddess, who blessed matrimonial unions with fruitfulness. In her character, as conceived in the earliest times, was exemplified that chastity which at first was estimated so highly and later abandoned so lightly. The myth regarding her states that, after her marriage, she was seen by no man except her husband. In allusion to this, her festival was celebrated at night by the Roman matrons, in the houses of the highest officers of the State. On such occasions, the man of the house left his abode in the evening, and with him was sent forth every male creature. All the statues of men that were in the house were carefully veiled, and for that night the women were in sole possession. As to the nature of the ceremonies, we have no very definite information; for, though they were not always safe from male intrusion, the matrons seem at least to have succeeded well in preserving the secret of their mysteries; but, as the Roman method of doing honor to the gods always included entertainment for the worshippers, we may take it for granted that the festival of Bona Dea consisted principally of banqueting, music, and games. It is alleged, however, that in later times these developed into practices far less innocent.

Juvenal says: "The secrets of Bona Dea are well known. When the music excites them and they are inflamed with it and the wine, these Mænads of Priapus rush wildly around, and whirl their locks and howl." Then he goes on to accuse the participators in these celebrations of the most depraved excesses. But Juvenal's shafts of satire are not so greatly characterized by the sharpness of their point as by the force with which they are launched; and it is very apparent that, in order to make his invectives tell, he never hesitated in resorting

to exaggeration. While all authorities agree that the rites employed in the worship of Bona Dea were accompanied in later times by unlicensed conduct on the part of the matrons, history gives no very conclusive proof of the veracity of the accusation. There is the intrusion of Clodius in the house of Julius Cæsar on such an occasion; but to cite this as evidence does not materially substantiate the charge, for the only woman who seemed willing to consent to his presence was Pompeia, and she did not have an opportunity to meet him, as the others very promptly drove him from the house.

The continual degeneration of Roman morals will compel us later on to depict a social life in which there is little to relieve the monotony of misconduct; hence it is only giving the Roman woman the full advantage of everything that may be said in her favor, if we glance back at an incident which happened in the times when virtuous matrons were still the rule and not the exception. In B.C. 295, the Senate, in order to avert evils predicted by the omens, decreed that two days should be spent in religious devotions. Livy relates that at this time a disagreement arose among the matrons who were worshipping at the Temple of Patrician Chastity. It is illustrative of the fact that it is difficult for women—though possibly the criticism should not be confined to their sex—to be faultless in essentials without being censorious in indifferent matters. We will allow the Roman historian to tell the story in his own fashion. "Virginia, daughter of Aulus, a patrician, but married to Volumnius the consul, a plebeian, was excluded by the other matrons from sharing in the sacred rites, because she had married out of the patrician order. A short altercation ensued, which was afterward, through the intemperance of passion incident to the sex, kindled into a flame of contention. Virginia

boasted with truth that she had a right to enter the Temple of Patrician Chastity, as being of patrician birth and chaste in her character, and, besides, the wife of one husband, to whom she was betrothed a virgin, and, moreover, she had no reason to be dissatisfied either with her husband, his exploits, or his honors. To her high-spirited words she added importance by an extraordinary act. She enclosed with a partition a part of her house, of a size sufficient for a small shrine, and there erected an altar. Then, calling together the plebeian matrons, and complaining of the injurious behavior of the patrician ladies, she said: 'This altar I dedicate to Plebeian Chastity, and exhort you that the same degree of emulation which prevails among the men of the State on the point of valor may be maintained by the women on the point of virtue; and that you contribute your best care that this altar may have the credit of being attended with a greater degree of sanctity and by chaster women than the other, if possible.' Solemn rites were performed at this altar under almost the same regulations as those of the more ancient one, no person being allowed the privilege of taking part in the sacrifices unless a woman of approved chastity, and who was the wife of one husband."

Livy goes on to relate that the plebeian shrine did not maintain the high standard set by its founder; for it afterward received women who were very far from living up to the rules originally laid down. It eventually passed out of existence; but that the patrician temple of chastity stood as a rebuke to the license of later generations is shown by Juvenal when he says: "With what sort of scorn Tullia snuffs the air when she passes the ancient altar of chastity."

The piety of the Roman women added many to the great number of temples erected for the worship of the gods,

and sacred edifices consecrated to goddesses were numerous. Sometimes temples were built by the State for the especial use of women. After the wrath of Coriolanus was appeased by women's instrumentality, the Temple of Female Fortune was presented to them as a reward. Another temple was consecrated to *Fortuna virilis*. The function of this goddess at first was to preserve to wives the affections of their husbands; but, as times changed, the divinity also forfeited her former good character, and degenerated into a patroness of the most unprincipled coquettes. This temple is one of the ancient edifices which have been preserved and turned to modern uses; for over a thousand years it has served as a Christian church, under the name of Saint Mary of Egypt. It belongs to Armenians of the Roman Catholic faith who reside in Rome; and the thought suggests itself that that vicissitude is not entirely inappropriate which has brought to pass that the temple, where ancient courtesans sought the aid of the goddess of chance, is now dedicated to Mary, the famous penitent of Egypt.

It was customary in imperial Rome for temples to be erected in honor of the emperors, but the memory of only one woman was ever thus celebrated; and in this case the devotion of the husband, rather than worthiness on the part of his wife, is indicated. This was the temple of Faustina, built after her death by the noble Antoninus Pius. If the historians of the time can be relied upon in the matter, there were no qualities in Faustina save her beauty which her imperial husband could justly commemorate. But Antoninus thought differently; and, in the history of the emperors, there is certainly nothing so affecting as the sanctity in which, to the day of his death, he held her memory. However faulty Faustina may have been, surely she was as worthy of being deified as most of the

emperors who received that honor. This, undoubtedly, was the thought of her husband, who was too much of a philosopher to believe seriously in any of the Roman deities, human or supernatural. He simply adopted the popular method in his desire to pay the highest honor possible to his wife. This temple, parts of which still remain, was also used as a church during the Middle Ages; but its chief interest at the present day is found in the numerous ancient scribblings that have been discovered upon its columns and their bases.

During the earlier years of the Republic, religion had an extremely good effect upon the morals of the people. Men dared not invoke the aid of Jove in an unjust cause; women could hope for favors at the hands of Vesta, Ceres, or Bona Dea only by pledging the rectitude of their conduct. But as the people lived continually in the fear of the gods, their religion was more effective as a police institution than it was productive as a source of comfort. As is inevitable with all religions, the spirit demanded new forms before the people became conscious that the old were outgrown; and the time came when Roman worship became nothing more than tiresome, uninteresting ceremonies, which were conducted with incredibly slavish care respecting niceties of ritual. This ceased to appeal to the heart, and could no longer commend itself convincingly to the mind. Hence, when foreign deities and new forms of worship came to Rome in the triumphal processions of the victorious generals, the people were ready to receive them with that hope which always welcomes untried possibilities.

A new deity ushered into their well-filled pantheon always seemed to the Romans a valuable acquisition. A god in Rome was a god for Rome; and to extend cordial hospitality to all known divinities was a part of the national

policy. As the conquering armies carried the fame of Rome further in the world, the women at home had an ever-widening range of divinities at whose altars they might make supplication for the success of the warriors. The city at last became as cosmopolitan in its pantheon as in its population. If the matrons tired of, or were disappointed with, time-honored Vesta and Ceres, they might turn to the passion-exciting rites of the Syrian Astarte, to the weird ceremonies of the Phrygian Cybele, or to the more intellectual mysteries of the Egyptian Isis. When Veii was captured, the most highly valued spoil was the statue of Matuta; and as fortune had forsaken the city, the goddess seemed content to depart with it. So at least the Romans believed; for they asserted that when the deity was asked if she were willing to take up her abode at Rome, she assented with a perceptible nod of the head. This was considered a piece of good fortune of almost equal worth with the gain of the city. The worship of Matuta being more peculiarly the function of the women, the fact that they outdid the men in their rejoicing is thus accounted for, history informing us that they crowded the temples to give thanks even before the people were ordered to do so by the Senate. Only married women, and of these only the freeborn, were allowed in the temple of Matuta, except when they carried thither their children for the blessing of the goddess.

But the first marked deterioration of the ancient Roman worship through the influence of foreign rites occurred with the advent of the Idæan Mother. In B.C. 203, the Romans, at the command of the Sybilline oracles, sent to Asia Minor for the famous Phrygian deity Cybele, the mythical mother of the gods. The Senate was required to appoint the most virtuous man in the Republic to the duty of receiving the image of the goddess. This honor

was awarded to Publius Scipio; but it was reserved to a matron to derive from the incident a more lasting fame and a greater present advantage. The women of Rome went to Ostia to escort the deity to the city. The legend narrates that the vessel bearing the image ran upon a shoal at the mouth of the Tiber, and all efforts to get it off proved ineffectual. One of the noblest of the matrons present was Claudia Quinta. Whether justly or otherwise, this lady had been brought under suspicion in regard to her conduct. Seeing in the predicament of the goddess a grand opportunity, she adventured her reputation upon a daring chance for vindication. Making her way to the side of the vessel, it being close to the bank, she supplicated the divine mother to bear witness to her virtue by following the persuasion of her chaste hands. Then she fastened her girdle to the prow of the boat, and, to the wonder of all and to the overthrow of her slanderers, the vessel easily yielded to her slight exertion. As a proof of the truth of this, following generations could point to the statue of Claudia which the men of the time erected at the door of the temple of Cybele.

Victor Duruy, commenting on the change wrought by these new divinities, says, "they gave a new cast to the religious convictions of people to whom a very crude form of worship had so long sufficed. Born in the scorching East, these deities required savage rites and pious orgies. Dramatic spectacles, intoxicating ceremonies, affected violently the dull Roman mind, and excited religious frenzy; for the first time the Roman felt those transports which, according to the character of the doctrine and the condition of the mind, produce effects diametrically opposite,—absolute purity of life, or the excess of debauchery sanctified by religious belief." Lucretius bears testimony to the truth of this in the vivid picture he draws of the

extravagancies which characterized the festival of Cybele. He describes her attendants in their pageants through the streets, dancing with ropes, leaping about to the sound of horrid music, while blood streams from their self-inflicted wounds. How this affected the women may be gathered from Juvenal, who pictures this furious chorus entering a house, and the priest threatening the matron with coming disasters, which she willingly seeks to avert with costly offerings. In another place he refers to the temple of "the imported mother of the gods" as being frequented by the abandoned women, who took part in the orgies performed in her honor. That the women were more addicted than the men to the worship of foreign deities is perhaps suggested by a passage in Tibullus. The poet is away from Rome, and sick. He complains: "There is no Delia here, who, when she was about to let me go from the city, first consulted all the gods . . . Everything prognosticated my return, yet nothing could hinder her from weeping and turning to look after me as I went. . . . What does your Isis for me now, Delia? What avail me those brazen sistra of hers so often shaken by your hand? Now, goddess, succor me; for that man may be healed by thee is proved by many a picture in thy temples. Let my Delia, dressed in linen, sit before thy sacred doors, performing vigils vowed for me; and twice a day, with hair unbound, let her recite thy due praises. But be it my lot to celebrate my native Penates, and to offer monthly incense to my ancient Lar."

But the most injurious of all the foreign superstitions was the Bacchanalian cult, which was introduced into Rome during the second century before Christ by a low-born Greek from Etruria. He professed himself to be a priest in charge of secret nocturnal rites. By appealing to the very worst propensities of which human nature is

capable, he soon gathered around him a large following of men and women, and these included representatives of the noblest families. They engaged in certain religious performances; but the chief attraction was an unrestrained indulgence in wine, feasting, and passion. Naturally, this organization also became a hotbed for every sort of crime, including murder and conspiracy. Owing to the pledge of secrecy extorted from the initiates, the contagion had spread to a prodigious extent before it came to the notice of the Senate. In the manner of its discovery, we have an interesting drama which throws light, not only upon the matter itself, but also reveals somewhat of the position of a certain class of Roman women, of which history takes little personal account.

Publius Ælbutius was a young man of knightly rank, whose father was dead and whose mother, Duronia, had married again. His stepfather, having abused the property of Ælbutius, and being unwilling to give an account, conspired with the unnatural mother so to manage that her son would not be in a position to demand an accounting. They agreed that the Bacchanalian rites were the only way to effect the ruin of the young man. Accordingly, his mother informed him that during his sickness she had vowed that, if through the kindness of the gods he should recover, she would initiate him into the rites of the Bacchanalians. She instructed him for ten days how to prepare himself, and promised that on the tenth she would conduct him to the place of meeting. The youth very innocently agreed to this, thinking that it was only the due of the gods by whose favor he enjoyed his restored health. All would have gone as his mother desired, had it not been for the fact that he had formed a strong attachment for a courtesan named Hispala Fecenia. This young freedwoman was of a character far superior to the

mode of life into which she had been forced while still a slave. Hispala knew more of the world than did Æbutius; and when he informed her that he was about to be initiated into the rites of the Bacchanalians, she declared that it would be better for him and also for her to lose their lives than that he should do such a thing. She told him that when she was a slave she had been taken to those rites by her mistress, though since her emancipation she had been exceedingly careful to avoid the place. She said that she knew it to be the haunt of all kinds of debauchery. Before they parted, the young man gave her his solemn promise that he would keep clear of those rites. The result of his adherence to this was that his mother and stepfather drove him from home, and he was goaded into telling the whole affair to the Consul Postumius, after first taking counsel with his aunt Æbutia.

After certain inquiries, Hispala was brought into the presence of the consul, to whom she gave a full account of the origin of the mysteries. She said that, at first, the rites were performed only by women. No man was admitted. At that time, they had three stated days in the year on which persons were initiated, but only in the daytime. The matrons then used to be appointed priestesses in rotation. Paculla Minia, a Campanian, when priestess, rearranged the whole system, alleging that she did so by the direction of the gods. She introduced men, the first being her own sons; she changed the time of celebration from day to night; and instead of three days in the year, appointed five days in each month for initiation. From the time that the rites were made thus common, and the licentious freedom of the night was added, there was nothing wicked, nothing flagitious, that had not been practised among them. To think nothing unlawful was the grand maxim of their religion.

After Hispala had made this revelation, Postumius proceeded to lay the whole matter before the Senate. A vigorous prosecution of the Bacchanalians ensued; and it was found that over seven thousand men and women had taken the oath of the association, thus proving that the rapid growth of a religion gives no assurance of the truth of its doctrines or the purity of its principles. Those who were found to be most deeply stained by evil practices were put to death; many put an end to themselves, so as to avoid punishment at the hands of the authorities; the others were imprisoned. The women who were condemned were delivered to their relations, or to those under whose guardianship they were, to be punished in private; but if there did not appear any proper person of the kind to execute the sentence, the punishment was nevertheless inflicted, but in private and by a person appointed by the court.

The Senate also passed a vote, on the suggestion of the Consul Postumius, that the city quæstors should give to both Æbutius and Hispala a certain goodly sum of money out of the public treasury, as a reward for discovering the iniquitous Bacchanalian ceremonies. Æbutius was exempted from compulsory service in the army; and to Hispala it was granted that she should enjoy the unique privileges of disposing in any way she chose of her property; that she should be at liberty to wed a man of honorable birth, and that there should be no disgrace to him who should marry her; and that it should be the business of the consuls then in office, and of their successors, to take care that no injury should ever be offered to her.

Though the Bacchanalian abuses were thus strenuously dealt with by the Roman authorities, this and other like parasitical growths which fastened themselves upon the religious instincts of the people were not to be shaken off.

Among the many noxious developments that crept over and eventually choked the life out of the sturdy ancient stock, we find every vicious substitute for religion known to the ante-Christian world. During the decadence of Rome, the ancient national religion became disintegrated and almost wholly superseded. Many of the empresses patronized the foreign orgiastic cults; and, taking the many-sided development of Roman religion as a whole, the strange spectacle is presented of a remarkable improvement in philosophy accompanying a great deterioration in morals. On the one hand, there were those who were struggling to a conception of the transcendental nature of the deity and the unity of nature; on the other hand were those who were doing in the name of the gods everything that is considered unworthy of humanity. And in all the evil fructification of base conceptions of religion, as well as in the knowledge of the higher philosophy, woman had her full share. No Roman woman was irreligious, however great the obliquity of her moral character, though sometimes her piety took a form so bizarre that the fact outruns imagination. Agrippina the Younger, for an example, was created priestess to the deified Claudius, whom she had cajoled into marrying her despite the fact that he was her uncle.

It must not be imagined, however, that because Roman religion developed these excesses through the infusion of Oriental superstitions, it came to be devoid of those uplifting influences which are the province of faith in the divine. There were never wanting those who, loving the good, the beautiful, and the true, supported their aspirations by their belief in the providence of deity; and the doctrine of a future life, though held only with much vacillation by the philosophers, was continually resorted to for comfort by the multitude. How widespread were

these ideas, and how greatly similar to our own were the thoughts of those ancient Romans, are matters lost sight of by people who need no further reason for dismissing a religion from their consideration than the mere fact that it is pagan. Plutarch, who defended the dogma of the unity of God, of His providence, and of the immortality of the soul, wrote to his wife: "You know that there are those who persuade the multitude that the soul, when once freed from the body, suffers no inconvenience nor evil." The more positive, though less philosophical, faith of the people is illustrated by the words a mother carved upon the sepulchre of her child: "We are afflicted by a cruel wound; but thou, renewed in thy existence, livest in the Elysian fields. The gods order that he who has deserved the light of day should return under another form; this is a reward which thy goodness has gained thee. Now, in a flowery mead, the blessed, marked with the sacred seal, admit thee to the flock of Bacchus, where the Naiades, who bear the sacred baskets, claim thee as their companion in leading the solemn processions by the light of the torches." Except for somewhat of the imagery, and the pagan names, this woman's faith might easily be accepted as Christian.

Chapter IV

The Passing of Old Roman Simplicity

IV

THE PASSING OF OLD ROMAN SIMPLICITY

WITH the spread of her foreign conquests, Rome herself was subjugated by a rapid revolution in thought and habit. From the middle of the second century before Christ, we look in vain for the old Republic. Religion, manners, morals, occupations, amusements—all have changed. The old-time Roman character is passing away, like a tide, through the narrowing channel of the ever-decreasing number of those who cling to the ancient ideals. Morality has started upon that ebb of which the days of Caligula and Nero saw the lowest mark to which a civilized people ever fell. The Romans could not withstand the temptations incidental to conquest. Physically invincible, they were not armed against the onset of foreign vices. The State grew inordinately wealthy by pillage and exaction; a single campaign yielded booty to the value of nine million six hundred thousand dollars. Scipio wept when he took Carthage; for well he knew that his people were in no way prepared to assume such extensive dominion, except at the cost of national character. Polybius says that after the conquest of Macedon men believed themselves able to enjoy in all security the conquest of the world and the spoils thereof.

But wealth was not the sole constituent of the harvest gathered in by Roman swords. After the transmarine wars, new ideas and Greek learning became common among a people who were not adapted, as the Greeks, to mere theorizing, but carried out their thoughts, whether for good or ill, to the full extent of their powers. The consequence was that Rome plunged with deadly earnestness into newly acquired vices; and the novel teachings of Hellenism, instead of elevating the minds of the people, served only to create indifference to the ancient divinities. "You ask," says Juvenal, "whence arise our disorders? A humble life in other days preserved the innocence of the Latin women. Protracted vigils, hands hardened by toil, Hannibal at the gates of Rome, and Roman citizens in arms upon her walls, guarded from vice the modest dwellings of our fathers. Now we endure the evils of a long peace; luxury has fallen upon us, more formidable than the sword, and the conquered world has avenged itself upon us by the gift of its vices. Since Rome has lost her noble poverty, Sybaris and Rhodes, Miletus and Tarentum, crowned with roses and scented with perfumes, have entered our walls." All the ancient writers agree upon the same verdict. The old austerity of life was more the result of poverty than of conscience; the simple habits of the first centuries of the Republic were cherished only so long as there were no means to render them more luxurious. Had wealth come to Rome through industry, the slower process, which alone develops the power of appreciation, would have fitted the people to make good use of their better fortune.

But riches surprised them; and we see ostentatious depravity quickly taking the place of a pure, though meagre, life. To quote again from Polybius, who himself was carried from Macedon to Rome as a prisoner of war: "Most

of the Romans live in strange dissipation. The young allow themselves to be carried away by the most shameful excesses. They are given to shows, to feasts, to luxury and disorder of every kind, which it is too evident they have learned from the Greeks during the war with Perseus." Cato calls attention to the new manners with that bitter scorn which was so strong in the old Roman. "See this Roman," he says; "he descends from his chariot, he pirouettes, he recites buffooneries and jokes and vile stories, then sings or declaims Greek verses, and then resumes his pirouettes." Imitation of the Greeks was zealously adopted in the education of the young. Scipio Æmilianus says: "When I entered one of the schools to which the nobles send their sons, great gods! I found there more than five hundred young girls and lads who were receiving among actors and infamous persons lessons on the lyre, in singing, in posturing; and I saw a child of twelve, the son of a candidate for office, executing a dance worthy of the most licentious slave." The school here referred to must not be understood as the regular institution for the imparting of knowledge to Roman children; the purpose of that described seems to have been the cultivation of what the Romans had come to regard as genteel accomplishments. There were other schools for instruction in reading, writing, and the usual branches of knowledge. These schools also were as free of access to girls as to boys, and were always conducted as private enterprises rather than by the State.

The remarkable revolution in thought and manners which Hellenism introduced into Rome could not fail profoundly to affect the existence of woman. That she was not far behind man in "running to every excess of riot" is abundantly shown by the historians and other writers of the time. In that city which was once remarkable

for the purity of its morals, houses of ill repute became plentiful. These were occupied principally by women who had been slaves, but had gained their liberty by the sacrifice of their honor. Houses of this character are the scenes of nearly all the comedies of Plautus and Terence, who found all their material in Rome, though they located the brothels of which they write at Athens and used Greek names for their characters. Prostitution, however, was not confined to the freedwomen; women of all classes were necessarily drawn into the vortex of degeneracy. Notwithstanding the fact that in B. C. 141 the Senate made a serious effort to resist the increasing looseness of morals, going so far as to build a temple to Venus Verticordia, the Venus who was supposed to convert women's hearts to virtue, the character of the times devoted the whole sex too zealously to Aphrodite for anything noteworthy to result from the appeal to her nobler namesake.

Yet it must not be imagined that all the new impulses which came from victorious contact with foreign lands had no other than a detrimental effect upon the life of the women of Rome. The changes which were taking place provided a door to liberty, though to very many it meant nothing else but an egress to unrestrained license. In any case, the horizon of the Roman woman's outlook became greatly extended; her mind expanded as it busied itself about an increasing number of subjects, and the range of her activities was materially widened. As her husband now had other interests besides those of the warrior, the citizen, and the agriculturist, in the last of which she had alone been allowed a recognized part, a larger field was now provided in which she might be his companion; henceforward she became less an appendage and more an equal. Not, however, because new laws were passed in her favor; indeed, the laws were framed

rather with the purpose of overcoming the results of those circumstances which were effecting her emancipation. But it is impossible to overcome a development which is the natural result of conditions that are welcomed by the people; so, in the new society by which the old order was superseded in Italy, women soon learned how, by means of legal fictions, they might accomplish ends which were still illegal. It is altogether a new woman that we find in the last century of the Republic, taking the place of the old-time matron. She drives about the city in an equipage befitting her wealth and position; she entertains in her sumptuous home learned men, with whom she studies the Greek authors; she brings such influence to bear on the Senate as to cause laws to be passed in her favor; she frequently intrigues in matters political; she is not unaccustomed to divorce and remarriage; and, thus engaged, she leaves the spinning of wool, the occupation from time immemorial esteemed honorable by matrons, entirely to her domestics and her slaves.

These great changes in the status of woman did not take place without a protest. They were the occasion of serious contentions in the Senate and of bitter reproaches on the part of the lovers of the old-fashioned ways. Hellenism being blamed for the mischief, on one occasion all Greek philosophers were driven from the city; but that was like removing the old seed after the well-matured plant had grown to depend upon its own roots. The people of Rome were in reality divided into three classes in respect to the new order of things. There were the younger men and women of the nobility, who welcomed the change, but who were intoxicated with the novel pleasures to which wealth gave them access, and into which they rushed with an utter disregard of propriety. Among them, however, were some thoughtful souls,—a class of a better

character,—who, while they most cordially entertained that which Hellenism had to teach them in regard to a broader style of life, knew how to winnow the chaff from the grain and to feed their minds with the latter. These found their best representatives in the Scipio family, all of whom were zealous patrons of Greek learning. As we have noticed in a previous chapter, Cornelia, the daughter of Scipio Africanus, maintained her house at Misenum in a most liberal manner, making it a centre of erudition and gathering around her many of the learned men of her time. In opposition to both these classes were men whose type may be found in all ages, who were uncompromising in their conservatism and who could see nothing but a presage of national disaster in every change from the old methods of life. Their complete idea of what a woman should be and do was expressed in the formula: "She is virtuous; she stays at home; she spins wool." This party was ably headed by Cato the Censor, who was entirely incapable of understanding why the women of his day should desire anything other than that which satisfied their feminine antecedents in the poverty-pinched times of the early Republic.

The ultra-conservative ideal was, of course, incapable of realization, though there was still in the minds of the people a large residuum of sentiment which could be employed in its favor; but when the times are ready to change, the most powerful appeal is futile. The wiser course was taken by the Scipios and the Gracchi, who endeavored to steer the new movement in the way of betterment and reform. This, if successful, would have conserved the ancient principles by adapting them to the new conditions, and Rome would have maintained her moral greatness while still enhancing her material prestige; but the momentum given by the haste of the people

to acquire what as yet they knew not how to enjoy carried Roman society past every turn in the right direction. Consequently, the mother of the Gracchi was honored as a prodigy of female excellence rather than, as she might have been, an example of what Roman matrons might become in the new liberty. Then began the loosening of moral restraint, by which Rome fell to a condition of savagery which was rendered all the more horrible by the presence of the material concomitants of civilization.

It must be remembered, however, that the common people of any age or country change their customs more slowly than do the more favored classes. Unfortunately, the historians have never regarded the lives of people of the ordinary populace as being worthy of record; hence, we have the names and the doings of only the women of the Roman nobility. Were it otherwise, it is probable that we should discover that among the matrons of the middle class in Italy there were in each generation many who maintained, in their quiet lives, the virtue of the ancient ideals, until the time came when their life principle was reinforced by new teaching, not from Greece, but from Galilee. Doubtless also, such as these were more greatly encouraged to perseverance by the stern conservatives who upheld the past—a model which they at least could comprehend—than they were by the high-minded progressivists, who led in paths which were as yet untried. For this reason, it may be well for us to take a glance at the home of Cato, who sturdily antagonized the new movement and was the uncompromising opposer of every effort to alter the fashion of female life. He was the valedictorian of ancient Roman simplicity. That the common people were in sympathy with him is shown by the fact that they erected his statue in the Temple of Health, and, instead of recounting his exploits in battle, simply placed

upon the pedestal an inscription saying that he was Cato the Censor, who vigilantly watched over the moral health of the State.

If the house of Cato is to be regarded as an example of the ancient manner of life, the suspicion is forced upon us that the young Roman women of the time must have been thankful that in the great statesman's home they saw the last of the old régime. It was a small house, situated on the censor's lands in the Sabine country, where the luxuriousness of the city was unknown. Here his wife dwelt, superintending the agricultural and domestic activities, while her husband was absent at Rome or in the wars. We may be sure that Cato's wife remained at home; this her husband's antipathy to expense sufficiently guarantees. The man who sold his horse, which had carried him through a severe campaign, because he would not charge the State with the cost of conveying it from Spain, would doubtless, by reason of the extra expense, refrain from giving his wife an invitation to join him in his official residence at the metropolis. Moreover, detesting the growing profligacy of the times, he had no mind to bring her into contact with that luxury which, as censor, he strove so mightily to eradicate. For amusement, she was obliged to content herself with the rustic festivals, which were more cheerful than exciting, and knew nothing of the terrible scenes of the circus and the amphitheatre, which the fashionable ladies of the city were accustoming themselves to witness with a calmness unbecoming to their sex. Her religious devotions were performed before the household gods and in the simple country shrines, if not with as great satisfaction, certainly with as good effect as they might have been in the splendid temples at Rome. In the conduct of her house were observed the strictest rules of frugality. There was no

waste; everything which the family could not use was sold, if only for a farthing.

Rectitude, justice, and thrift were the only ideals followed in this home. If Cato's wife possessed anything of the artistic in her temperament, she enjoyed little opportunity for its indulgence. Her husband was very far from the opinion that the gods and goddesses were more easily propitiated by devotions paid before beautiful Grecian statuary than when represented by the ill-shaped images of Roman creation. In the otherwise undecorated atrium were the Penates and the Lares—small and homely figures indeed, but endowed with all the accumulated glory of the family; for to them was attributed all the success of the past, and, if faithfully reverenced, as they were likely to be in such a household, they were pledges for the prosperity of the future. Religion must have been of especial value in Cato's family, for its offices were the only form of sentiment that was given any freedom of expression; all else was under the ban of the most arid practicality. There were no old retainers who, by many years of devoted service, had gained an established place in the affections of those upon whom they waited; and if the mistress had been inclined to cherish such natural regard, it was ruthlessly ignored, it being a rule with her husband to sell his slaves for anything they would bring, as soon as they became old and infirm. Even the bondwomen at whose breasts his children had been nursed had for him no other than a monetary value. The signs of affection were, in his judgment, the marks of weakness. What a barren-hearted puritan he must have been who could expel an honored citizen from the Senate for no other reason than that he had kissed his own wife in the presence of their daughter! And what a husband, who could make his boast that he had never caressed his wife—presumably,

he meant under circumstances where others might witness such flagitious conduct—except on the occasion of a severe thunderstorm, when he was obliged to resort to that means of soothing her! This was evidently, however, an affectation; for Cato admitted that it was a pleasure to him when Jove thundered. It is apparent that his idea of the good old Roman manner of treating a wife did not recognize the need of indulgence; and it is not likely that one who himself took great pride in wearing the most inexpensive quality of clothing, and was, as we shall see, the inveterate enemy of costliness and changing fashion in woman's attire, ever gratified his wife with a present of wearing apparel from the city—unless she, like himself, could rate the worth of an article by the cheapness of the bargain. Yet it is on record that he was an excellent husband, and that he greatly appreciated his wife, whom he married for her noble nature, despite the fact that she brought him but a small dowry and was not of a family high in position. Doubtless his good qualities were appreciated by his wife, especially if she was meek enough in disposition to submit willingly to an unceasing surveillance and interference in the minutest household matters, even, as Plutarch informs us, to the bathing and dressing of the infants.

Such was the family of Cato. It was modelled after what he conceived to be the best traditions of Roman society before it became corrupted by the pernicious foreign influence. He governed his own household by those same stern principles which he sought by precept, example, and authority to enforce upon the Roman people of his time. But his home was the last survival of the old simplicity. An age had dawned when Roman matrons were to become more of a factor in public life and would no longer be satisfied to abide in the shadow of domestic

routine. In their newly gained liberty they ran to the furthest extreme of unreasonableness; but Cato's ideas were too illiberal for nature.

During the early part of the second century before Christ, there was enacted around the Forum a scene such as never before had been witnessed or dreamed of in Rome. Crowds of matrons were there assembled to implore, and to gain by their importunity, the repeal of a law which curtailed their expenditure on dress. This was the Oppian law, which had been passed a few years previously, during the Second Punic War, when money was needed for the public service, and the people, not excluding the women, had responded with unbounded enthusiasm. The law in question decreed that "No woman should possess more than half an ounce of gold, or wear a garment of various colors, or ride in a carriage drawn by horses, in a city or any town or any place nearer thereto than one mile, except on occasion of some public religious solemnity." It is assumed by all writers that the half-ounce of gold to which the women were restricted put a restraint, beyond that limit, on the ornamentation of their dress; this is based on the very natural supposition that whatever of the precious metal they possessed would surely be displayed upon their persons. It is a little doubtful whether the decree concerning vehicles was inserted into the measure in order that the horses might be placed at the disposal of the army, or whether this was a crafty interpolation for the purpose of restricting the growing ostentation of the ladies. However, the law had been passed without any objection, so far as is known, from the women. But patient, uncomplaining submission on the part of the Roman women to their male guardians, whether collective or individual, was now becoming a thing of the past. They could neither make nor repeal laws;

but they were no longer afraid to bring their influence to bear on those in whom lay that power. Champions of their cause were found in the two plebeian tribunes, and these moved in the Senate for the repeal of the Oppian law. Then ensued such a turmoil as if Hannibal were again menacing the gates of Rome, except that there was no unanimity of mind as to what should be done. This, however, only describes the attitude of the men; the women were united and, what is more, they were determined. They adopted what has become a common method in modern times; not that of forwarding to the legislators a numerously signed petition,—which is always a stronger protest than an effective influence,—but the more powerful one of pertinacious "lobbying." Crowds of women, reinforced by many who came in from the country towns and villages, thronged the streets leading to the Forum and importuned the men who were to decide the matter in which they were concerned. But they found an inexorable opponent in the redoubtable Cato. Livy gives us what he conceives the forceful orator to have said on the occasion:

"If, Romans, every individual among us had made it a rule to maintain the prerogative and authority of a husband with respect to his own wife, we should have less trouble with the whole sex. But now, our privileges, overpowered at home by female contumacy, are, even here in the Forum, spurned and trodden under foot; and because we are not able to withstand each separately, we now dread their collective body. . . . It was not without painful emotions of shame that I, just now, made my way to the Forum through the midst of a band of women. Had I not been restrained by respect for the modesty and dignity of some individuals among them, rather than of the whole number, and been unwilling that

THE "NEW" WOMAN IN ROME

After the painting by G. R. C. Boulanger

In the new society by which the old order was superseded in Italy, women soon learned how, by means of legal fictions, they might accomplish ends which were still illegal. It is altogether a new woman that we find in the last century of the Republic, taking the place of the old-time matron. She drives on the Appian Way and about the city in an equipage befitting her wealth and position; her naked African slaves wear silver collars and beat off the beggar boys, if she halts to purchase flowers; she entertains in her sumptuous home learned men, with whom she studies the Greek authors; she brings such influence to bear on the Senate as to cause laws to be passed in her favor; she frequently intrigues in matters political; she is not unaccustomed to divorce and remarriage; and, thus engaged, she leaves the spinning of wool, the occupation from time immemorial esteemed honorable by matrons, entirely to her domestics and her slaves.

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they should be seen rebuked by a consul, I should have said to them: 'What sort of practice is this, of running into public, besetting the streets, and addressing other women's husbands? Could not each have made the same request to her husband at home? Are your blandishments more seducing in public than in private, and with other women's husbands than your own? Although, if the modesty of matrons confined them within the limits of their own rights, it did not become you, even at home, to concern yourselves about what laws might be passed or repealed here.' Our ancestors thought it not proper that women should perform any, even private, business, without a director; but that they should ever be under the control of parents, brothers, or husbands. We, it seems, suffer them now to interfere in the management of State affairs, and to introduce themselves into the Forum, into general assemblies, and into assemblies of election. For, what are they doing at this moment in your streets and lanes? What but arguing, some in support of the motion of the plebeian tribunes, others for the repeal of the law? Will you give the reins to their intractable nature, and their uncontrolled passions, and then expect that they themselves should set bounds to their lawlessness, when you have failed to do so? This is the smallest of the injunctions laid on them by usage or the laws, all of which women bear with impatience. They long for liberty, or rather, to speak the truth, for unbounded freedom in every particular. For what will they not attempt, if they now come off victorious?

"Recollect all the institutions respecting the sex, by which our forefathers restrained their undue freedom, and by which they subjected them to their husbands; and yet, even with the help of all these restrictions, you can hardly keep them within bounds. If, then, you suffer them to

throw these off one by one, to tear them all asunder, and, at last, to set themselves on an equal footing with yourselves, can you imagine that they will be any longer tolerable by you? The moment that they have arrived at an equality with you, they will have become your superiors. But, forsooth, they only object to any new law being made against them; they mean not to deprecate justice, but severity. Nay, their wish is that a law which you have admitted, established by your suffrages, and confirmed by the practice and experience of so many years to be beneficial, should now be repealed; that is, by abolishing one law you should weaken all the rest. No law perfectly suits the convenience of every member of the community; the only consideration is, whether, upon the whole, it be profitable for the greater part. . . . I should like, however, to know what this important affair is which has induced the matrons thus to run out into public in this excited manner, scarcely restraining from pushing into the Forum and the assembly of the people. . . . What motive, that even common decency will allow to be mentioned, is pretended for this female insurrection? Why, say they, that we may shine in gold and purple; that, both on festal and common days, we may ride through the city in our chariots, triumphing over vanquished and abrogated law, after having captured and wrested from you your suffrages; and that there may be no bounds to our expenses and our luxury.

"Often have you heard me complain of the profuse expenses of the women—often of those of the men; and that not only of men in private stations, but of the magistrates; and that the State was endangered by two opposite vices—luxury and avarice, those pests which have been the ruin of all great empires. These I dread the more, as the circumstances of the commonwealth grow

daily more prosperous and happy. As the Empire increases, as we have now passed over into Greece and Asia, places abounding with every kind of temptation that can inflame the passions, so much the more do I fear that these matters will bring us into captivity, rather than we them. Believe me, those statues from Syracuse were brought into this city with harmful effect. I already hear too many commending and admiring the decorations of Athens and Corinth, and ridiculing the earthen images of our Roman gods that stand on the fronts of their temples. For my part, I prefer these gods—propitious as they are, and I hope will continue to be, if we allow them to remain in their own mansions. . . . When the dress of all is alike, why should any one of you fear lest she should not be an object of observation? Of all kinds of shame, the worst, surely, is the being ashamed of frugality or of poverty; but this law relieves you with regard to both; since that which you have not it is unlawful for you to possess. This equalization, says the rich matron, is the very thing that I cannot endure. Why do I not make a figure, distinguished with gold and purple? Why is the poverty of others concealed under this cover of a law, so that it should be thought that, if the law permitted, they would have such things as they are not now able to procure? Romans, do you wish to excite among your wives an emulation of this sort, that the rich should wish to have what none other can have; and the poor, lest they be despised as such, should extend their expenses beyond their means? Be assured that when a woman once begins to be ashamed of what she ought not to be ashamed of, she will not be ashamed of what she ought. She who can will purchase out of her own purse; she who cannot will ask her husband. Unhappy is the husband, both he who complies with the request, and he who does not;

for what he will not give himself he will see given by another. . . . So soon as the law shall cease to limit the expenses of your wife, you yourself will never be able to do so. Do not suppose that the matter will hereafter be in the same state in which it was before the law was made on the subject. It is safer that a wicked man should never be accused than that he should be acquitted; and luxury, if it had never been meddled with, would be more tolerable than it would be when, like a wild beast, irritated by being chained, it is let loose. My opinion is that the Oppian law ought, on no account, to be repealed."

The women, however, were not without their champion. In a debate on some ordinary affair of State, Lucius Valerius the Tribune would have been an inconsiderable antagonist for Cato; but, on this occasion, what he lacked in oratorical prestige was atoned for in that he had by far the more reasonable side of the argument. The fact that it was the custom of the Roman historians to compose, rather than report, the addresses of their orators renders any comparison of these two Senatorial speeches on woman's rights entirely uninteresting. Valerius is made to say: "Shall our wives alone reap none of the fruits of the public peace and tranquillity? Shall we men have the use of the purple? Shall our children wear gowns bordered with the same color, and shall we interdict the use of it to women alone? Shall your horse, even, be more splendidly caparisoned than your wife is clothed?" An appeal to the sympathy of the voters is made, as the matrons of Rome are represented as "seeing those ornaments allowed to the wives of the Latin confederates, of which they themselves have been deprived. They will behold those riding through the city in their carriages, and decorated with gold and purple, while they are obliged to follow on foot. . . . This would hurt the feelings even

of men, and what do you think must be its effect on weak women, whom even trifles can disturb? Neither offices of State nor of the priesthood, nor triumphs, nor badges of distinction, nor military presents, nor spoils, may fall to their share. Elegance of appearance, and ornaments, and dress—these are the women's badges of distinction; in these they delight and glory; these our ancestors called the women's world."

The Oppian law was repealed, and Cato, as if he wished to escape the sight of the resulting disasters which he anticipated, took the command of a fleet of war vessels and sailed away to Spain. How the new liberty affected his own wife we are left to surmise; which is not difficult, in view of the opening sentences of his address.

While we are on the subject of the extraordinary fight of the women for the repeal of this sumptuary law, it will not be inappropriate to take a glance at the female dress of the time. There is ample evidence to show that the women of ancient Rome were as prone to changing fashions as are the ladies of our own day; but for several centuries the various parts of their attire remained very much the same, the varying style affecting chiefly the material and the quality. The costume of a Roman lady consisted of three principal garments,—the under tunic, the *stola,* and the *palla.*

The under tunic was simply a sleeveless chemise, which was worn next to the body. Stays, of course, were utterly unknown to the ancients, as is shown by their statuary, which in these times affords us our only opportunity of knowing what a naturally developed female figure is like. A bosom band, or, as it was called, a *strophium,* made of leather, was frequently worn above the tunic.

The *stola* was a white garment with sleeves, which covered only the upper part of the arm; it was fastened

above the shoulder with a clasp. The *stola* hung in large folds reaching to and covering the feet; around the bottom was sewn a broad flounce, called the *institia*. Above this *institia* was a purple band, which was the only color, other than white, ever used for the *stola*, except a colored stripe or sometimes gold around the neck. Among the Romans, the *stola* had a serious significance, beyond its use as an article of attire. Only matrons of unsullied reputation were permitted to wear it. Women of tarnished character were obliged to wear a dark-colored *toga*, somewhat similar to that of the men; we find Horace speaking of the *togata*,—in contradistinction to the matrons, and Tibullus writes of the prostitute with her *toga*.

The *palla*, the out-of-doors garment, was to the women what the *toga* was to the men. This was a large, white, and probably square, robe, or mantle,—later on, colors became fashionable,—and the complex manner of wearing it may best be understood by an examination of Roman statuary. The feet were protected by sandals in the house, and shoes for street or public wear; these were greatly ornamented. The shoes were of various colors, generally white, but frequently green or yellow, and fastened with red strings.

The Roman ladies, like those of modern times, exercised great care in the dressing and arranging of their hair; and it is not to be denied that they frequently sought, by artificial means, to rectify mistakes which they deemed nature had made in the selection of color. In the time of Juvenal, blonde seems to have had the preference. The ordinary style was to carry the hair in smooth braids to the back of the head and there fasten it in a knot, as usually seen in the statues. In ancient Rome the curling iron was no less an intimate and indispensable friend of the lady of fashion than it is at present; by this and other

means, too intricate for explanation by the uninitiated, marvellous creations were produced. The satirist says: "Into so many tiers she forms her curls, so many stories high she builds her head; in front you will look upon an Andromache, behind she is a dwarf,—you would imagine her another person." History reveals no age in which attention to personal adornment was not such an intimate characteristic of female nature that women, when unendowed with remarkable beauty, have been able to refrain from unwisely seeking to attract notice by disfiguring themselves.

The Roman women wore ornaments in considerable profusion. These consisted principally of necklaces, arm bands, finger rings, and ear rings. Generally they were of gold, set with precious stones, and the workmanship was often of a most exquisite character. A necklace was found at Pompeii which was made of a band of plaited gold; on each half of the clasp there is a well-executed frog, and on the edges where the clasp joined were rubies, one of which still remains in its setting; suspended to the necklace are seventy-one small, artistically shaped pendants. Very many specimens of the jewelry worn by the women of ancient Rome are still in existence, and they indicate fine artistic taste on the part of the wearers, as well as great ability in design and execution on that of the makers.

On the dressing table of the fashionable Roman lady there appeared a wealth and a variety of cosmetics and costly essences in boxes and receptacles delicately formed of ivory and precious metals, as well as many other appliances for the toilet; so that her advantages in these respects were probably in no way inferior to those of her fair successors in modern times. An age was drawing near which, among many other examples of its monstrous

luxuriousness, gave birth to efforts to enhance feminine attractiveness—efforts which doubtless were as futile as they were foolish.

The time, however, had already come when, notwithstanding that their manners were under the eye of such a censor as Cato, the women of Rome had entirely and forever abandoned their old simplicity of life. In the *Epidicus* of Plautus, written at about the time of the disturbance over the Oppian law, the matrons were represented on the stage as though decked out with valuable estates; the cost of a cloak was the price of a farm.

The new woman had begun to make her appearance in Rome. This proverbial phenomenon, so greatly talked of in our own time, is by no means a modern discovery. She is a principal and an inevitable accompaniment of progress in every age and race. She is either a natural evolution or a monstrosity, according to the social conditions of her time. When progress is normal and national development healthy, a more enlightened and more sanely independent type of woman is continually appearing; but so naturally and so quietly does she step into the higher position for which she has been enabled to prepare herself that her coming is without observation. On the other hand, where society is decadent, where abnormal growths are favored by the heat of unrestrained passions, and where volcanic revolutions in a nation may exalt characters which belong to the shades of inferiority to positions of high conspicuity, there appear feminine wonders upon earth; and men's hearts fail them for fear, as they await with consternation the things which are shortly to come to pass. Rome, during the latter years of the republican period, was in a condition favorable to the production of anything bizarre and phenomenal. The new wealth, the new learning, the new idleness, and the

new vices were fit soil for the production of a new woman who would astonish the world for all time with her capacity for every excess of moral insanity.

We do not, however, mean to allege that with the greater privileges and increased freedom which entered into woman's life the old virtues and time-honored excellences entirely disappeared. As Cornelia graced with her learning and dignity the Rome of Cato's day, so did Cæcilia with her charity and her goodness the Rome of Cicero. That orator was undoubtedly prejudiced in her favor on account of the great kindness she showed to Roscius, his client; but he could not have eulogized this matron as he did, had not public opinion concurred with him in setting her up as a model for all other women. "An incomparable woman," her accomplished relations had no less honor conferred on them by her character than she received by their dignity. Thus an unbroken chain of noble-minded matrons may be traced through the darkest days of Rome's decadent morality. Nevertheless, though virtue did not cease to be exemplified by the few, or to be extolled by the writers, the growing depravity of the times made it constantly easier for unprincipled and impudent women to find their conduct accepted as the ordinary rule of life.

One chief cause—perhaps it is more correct to call it an accompaniment—of the breaking-down of the ancient ideals is found in the increasing tendency to deprecate the indissolubleness of marital bonds. Divorce became common and easy, so that the student of Roman biography finds it increasingly difficult to trace his characters through the many involutions of their various matrimonial alliances. Pompey married five times. Concerning his first two wives, Plutarch makes the following comment: "Sylla, admiring the valor and conduct of Pompey, . . . sought

means to attach him to himself by some personal alliance, and his wife Metella joining in his wishes, they persuaded Pompey to put away Antistia, and marry Æmilia, the step-daughter of Sylla, she being at that very time the wife of another man, living with him, and with child by him. These were the very tyrannies of marriage, and much more agreeable to the times under Sylla than to the nature and habits of Pompey, that Æmilia, great with child, should be, as it were, ravished from the embraces of another for him, and that Antistia should be divorced with dishonor and misery by him for whose sake she had just before been bereft of her father—for Antistius was murdered in the Senate because he was suspected to be a favorer of Sylla for Pompey's sake. Antistia's mother, likewise, after she had seen all these indignities, made away with herself, a new calamity to be added to the tragic accompaniments of this marriage; and that there might be nothing wanting to complete them, Æmilia herself died, almost immediately after entering Pompey's house, in childbed."

Down to a very late date, a divorce is not met with in the annals of Rome; but with what unconcern the undoing of the marriage knot came to be regarded is well illustrated in the life of Cato the Younger. Attilia, his first wife, was put away for misconduct. Then he married Marcia, against whose reputation no blighting wind of scandal ever raged. Among the dearest friends of her husband was Hortensius, known as a man of good position and excellent character. Evidently, as the sequel shows, in all seriousness he sought to persuade Cato that the latter's daughter Portia, who was married to a man to whom she had borne two children, might be given to him. His argument was that she, as a fair plot of land, ought to bear fruit; but that it was not right that one man should

be provided with a larger family than he could support, while another had none. Cato answered that he loved Hortensius very well, and much approved of uniting their houses; but he could not approve of forcibly taking away his daughter from her husband. Then Hortensius was bold enough to request that Cato, who, he thought, had enough children, should relinquish to him his own wife. Cato, seeing that he was in earnest, consented to do this, stipulating first that his wife's father should be consulted. No objection being raised in that quarter, a marriage was performed between Marcia and Hortensius, Cato assisting at the ceremony. In all this there is no mention made of Marcia's consent being given or even asked. Some years afterward, Cato, wanting someone to keep his house and take care of his daughters, took Marcia again, Hortensius being now dead and having left her all his estate. Cæsar, upon this, reproached Cato with covetousness; "for," he said, "if he had need of a wife, why did he part with her? And if he had not, why did he take her again? unless he gave her only as a bait to Hortensius, and lent her when she was young, to have her again when she was rich." The historian answers this by quoting the verse of Euripides:

> "'To speak of mysteries—the chief of these
> Surely were cowardice in Hercules.'

For," he says, "it were much the same thing to reproach Hercules for cowardice and to accuse Cato of covetousness." The explanation of this singular action, the cold nature which Cato inherited from his grandfather the Censor being taken into consideration, seems to lie in the fact that the Roman idea of the necessary guardianship over women precluded any just conception of their rights in the disposal of their own persons. The giving

and the taking of a woman in marriage was wholly the business of her father and her suitor; nothing was required of her in the transaction save thankful obedience. Cato was perfectly at liberty to give away his wife, if he so desired; this right was guaranteed to him by the simple fact that she was his property.

For the same reason, while chastity on the part of the wife was regarded as an absolute essential, the same virtue was by no means considered as necessary to the good character of the man. The demand for purity in the wife was largely based on the idea of proprietary rights which the husband had in her person; hence the man could divorce the woman for infidelity, but the reverse was not conceded. Plautus introduces upon the stage two matrons, one of whom complains of her husband, and the other consoles and exhorts her thus: "Listen to me. Do not quarrel with your husband; let him love whom, and let him do what, he pleases, since you have everything you want at home; keep in mind the fearful sentence: 'Begone, woman!' "

The new era which had dawned in Rome brought a certain freedom of circumstances and activity within the reach of women; but it did not give them in the marriage contract any more liberty than they had of old. The only women who were allowed the disposal of their own persons were the courtesans. There are many evidences that these were not regarded with the disrespect in which their class is held in modern times. For an example, Flora, who was famous in the last days of the Republic, received on account of her exquisite beauty the high honor of having her statue dedicated to the temple of Castor and Pollux; which may be regarded as a kind of precedent for artists who in an Italy of a much later date employed their mistresses as models for their Madonnas. That this class of

women did not hesitate to place a high value upon themselves is proved by the instance of Tertia, to whom Verres presented a Sicilian city. Lucretius speaks of the cost of their favors, giving us also an interesting picture of the gayly dressed wanton:

> "Amply though endowed,
> His wealth decays, his debts with speed augment,
> The post of duty never fills he more,
> And all his sick'ning reputation dies.
> Meanwhile rich unguents from his mistress laugh,
> Laugh from her feet soft Sicyon's shoes superb:
> The green-rayed emerald o'er her, dropt in gold,
> Gleams large and numerous; and the sea-blue silk,
> Deep-worn, enclasps her.
> What his sires amassed
> Now flaunts in ribbands, in tiaras flames
> Full o'er her front, and now to robes converts
> Of Chian loose, or Alidonian mould;
> While feasts and festivals of boundless pomp,
> And costliest viands, garlands, odors, wines,
> And scattered roses ceaseless are renewed."

The Voconian law, which had been enacted in the days of the elder Cato, the purpose of which was the prevention of large accumulations of property in female hands, did not prevent women from becoming rich in the manner suggested above. A man might give away all his property while alive; the law only vetoed excessive legacies. By its provisions, no woman was allowed to receive by inheritance property exceeding the value of one hundred thousand sesterces. "Since with the growing power of the Empire the riches of private persons were increasing, fear was felt lest the minds of women, being rather inclined by nature to luxury and the pursuit of a more elegant routine of life, and deriving from unbounded wealth incentives to desire, should fall into immoderate expenses and luxury, and should subsequently chance to

depart from the ancient sanctity of manners, so that there would be a change of morals no less than of the manner of living." These were the reasons for the enactment of this measure. It was the kind of law which was dear to the heart of the Censor, and it was with great delight that he lent his aid to its passage. The people were a little doubtful as to its justice; but Cato put an end to all hesitation by inveighing, with his usual asperity, against the tyranny of women and their insufferable insolence when opulent. He complained that oftentimes, when they brought a rich dowry to their husbands, they kept back a large part of the money, and then made loans to their husbands as though these were mere debtors. The historian says that this assertion, enforced with a loud voice and good lungs, moved the people to indignation, and they voted to pass the law. It was exceedingly characteristic of the sentiments of the ancient Romans to be convinced by Cato as he strenuously objected to that in women which he strongly advocated as a rule for men.

There are two feminine names which, though belonging to women who were contemporaries, well represent different aspects of the transition from the old Rome of uncultured simplicity to the new Rome of immoral refinement. One is Cornelia, who was the fifth wife of Pompey the Great; the other is Clodia, the sister of Clodius the Turbulent. One conjoined the new learning with the ancient purity of life, the other united luxurious living with an abandoned career; one was a worthy successor of her worthy namesake of a former generation, the other was a forerunner of the amazing female characters of the most depraved days of the Empire.

Cornelia, like the mother of the Gracchi, belonged to the renowned family of the Scipios. Though but a very young woman when she was married to Pompey, she had

already been the wife of that son of Crassus who was slain in Parthia. That her first marriage was a happy one may be argued from the fact that when Pompey fell into misfortune, and she, for some sentimental reason, imagined herself as uniting him to woes which rightly belonged to her own fate, she reproached herself for not having followed the husband of her youth in his death, as she had designed.

Plutarch informs us that the young lady possessed other attractions besides those of youth and beauty. She was highly educated, as might be expected in a daughter of Metellus Scipio; she was an accomplished performer upon the lute; she understood geometry, and was accustomed to listen with profit and appreciation to lectures on philosophy. The historian takes great satisfaction in informing us also that, with all this, she had escaped that pretentiousness and unamiability which too frequently spoiled the effect of learning in women of unusual acquirements.

Owing to the terrible civil strife which afflicted Rome in the last days of the Republic, and to Pompey's leading share in it, Cornelia's home was frequently the martial camp of her husband. The Empire of Rome had grown to be the whole extent of civilization, and Cornelia's learning found ample opportunity, through her travels, to become reinforced by that liberality of mind which is the result of wide observation. She appears to have gained the high regard of her husband's army; for once, after a struggle with Cæsar, in which Pompey was for the moment victorious, some of the soldiers, of their own accord, sailed to Lesbos to carry to her the joyful tidings that the war was ended. Her pleasure in this news was of short duration; for it was soon to be her unhappy lot to accompany her husband to Egypt, in his flight from the all-subduing Cæsar. There she witnessed

his assassination by the perfidious hands from which he sought protection.

It is unfortunate that the after career of Cornelia is lost sight of by history; but even this silence in a manner speaks in her favor; for, while the natural nobility of her character could not suffer by the quenching of the strong light which shone around Pompey, there is some warrant for assurance, in the very fact that her doings were not the subject of comment, that her life continued honorable.

Clodia was a woman of altogether different character. She was of the great Claudian *gens;* and no member of that powerful family ever lived so quietly as not to be the subject of discourse in Rome. To be one of the Claudii meant to be impetuous and dominant, either in good or in evil. It was a Vestal of this family who, when her father was refused a triumph by the Roman people, placed herself in his chariot so as to prevent his being interrupted in his progress through the city. Clodia, studied from the point of heredity, might have been either good or bad; but she would have contravened all precedents in her family had she not been extreme in one or the other. As it was, she made a fitting sister for that Clodius who stormed in Rome during the days of Cicero and kept the city by the ears, both on account of his ambitions and his ill-considered exploits.

Clodia was married to Quintus Metellus, to whom Cicero affords a most honorable tribute; but she did not allow the fact of her marriage to place any restraint upon the licentiousness of her conduct. Her luxurious house by the Tiber was a meeting place, not for men of learning, but for all the idle, fashionable, and dissolute young men of the city. Her reputation has been pilloried forever by the eloquent advocate in his defence of Marcus Cœlius. This young man was accused of having attempted to poison

Clodia, in order to rid himself of the necessity of paying back some gold he was said to have borrowed from her. The real truth appears to be that this prosecution was mainly instituted by Clodia, who considered herself slighted by Cœlius, who had been her lover, but whose ardor was waning. The character and manner of life of this irrepressible young Roman matron may be gathered from the following arraignment of her in Cicero's oration. "If I am to proceed in the old-fashioned way and manner of pleading, then I must summon up from the Shades below one of those bearded old men,—not men with those little bits of imperials which she takes such a fancy to, but a man with that long, shaggy beard which we see on the ancient statues and images,—to reproach the woman, and to speak in my stead, lest she by any chance get angry with me. Let, then, some one of her own family rise up, and above all others that great blind Claudius of old time. For he will feel the least grief, inasmuch as he will not see her. And, in truth, if he can come forth from the dead, he will deal with her thus; he will say: 'Woman, what have you to do with Cœlius? Why have you been so intimate with him as to lend him gold, or so much an enemy as to fear his poison? Was he a relation? A connection? Was he a friend of your husband? Nothing of the sort. What was the reason, then, except some folly? Even if the images of us, the men of your family, had no influence over you, did not even my own daughter, that celebrated Claudia Quinta, admonish you to emulate the praise belonging to our house from the glory of its women? Did not that Vestal Claudia recur to your mind, who embraced her father while celebrating his triumph, and prevented his being dragged from his chariot by a hostile tribune of the people? Why had the vices of your brother more weight with you than the virtues of your father, of your

grandfather, and others in regular descent ever since my own time—virtues exemplified not only in the men, but also in the women? Was it for this that I broke the treaty which was concluded with Pyrrhus, that you should every day make new treaties of most disgraceful love? Was it for this I made the Appian Way, that you should travel along it escorted by other men besides your husband?' "

This reincarnation of the severe old ancestor ought to have been sufficient to strike terror and repentance into any woman's heart. But Cicero was more concerned with exonerating Cœlius than he was about reforming Clodia, and doubtless he had more hope of convicting her of being a follower of undue courses than he had of converting her from her ways. So he goes on: "But if you wish me to deal more courteously with you, I will put away that harsh and almost boorish old man; and out of these kinsmen of yours here present I will take some one, and, before all, I will select your youngest brother, who is one of the best-bred men of his class, who is exceedingly fond of you, and who, on account of some childish timidity, I suppose, and some groundless fears of what may happen by night, always, when he was but a little boy, slept with you, his eldest sister. Suppose, then, that he speaks to you in this way: 'What are you making this disturbance about, my sister? Why are you so mad? You saw a young man become your neighbor; his fair complexion, his height, his countenance, and his eyes made an impression on you; you wished to see him oftener; you were sometimes seen in the same gardens with him, being a woman of high rank; you are unable with all your riches to detain him, the son of a thrifty and parsimonious father. He rejects you, he does not think your presents worth so much as you require of him. Try someone else. You have gardens on the Tiber, and you carefully made them

in that particular spot to which all the youths of the city come to bathe. From that spot you may every day pick out people to suit you. Why do you annoy this one man who scorns you?' "

If the orator was just in all that he insinuates against her, Clodia, the wealthy, fashionable, and doubtless beautiful daughter of the great patrician family, was well qualified to be the high priestess of Aphrodite for the city of Rome.

Chapter V

Roman Marriage

V

ROMAN MARRIAGE

THE position of woman in ancient Rome was always one of honor and respect. A Roman matron enjoyed many more social privileges and a much greater independence than did the Greek wife. In Athens the women were treated as children; and the more respectable their character, the more completely were they shut out from the social life and the public amusements of the men. In Rome, on the contrary, though the wife was subordinate to her husband and, as a rule, did not make herself conspicuous in public affairs, she was in no way secluded, and was everywhere treated with the highest respect. In the home, she was the mistress of the whole household economy, supervising the instruction of the children and governing the domestic slaves. She stood side by side with her husband, sharing in all his dignities, and in all matters pertaining to the family wielding an authority second only to his. Somewhere between the civilizations of Greece and Rome was the boundary line, starting from which the status of woman degraded to the Oriental or developed into the Occidental type. In the one case, subject to the jealous veil, the espionage of eunuch slaves, the debasing, soul-benumbing servilities of the harem; in the other, living in the open, the sole mate of one man, and,

subject to her husband alone, clothed with all authority in her home. While Greece looked to the East, and subjected her women to some of those customs which characterized the harems of Babylon, Rome was essentially Western, and its women enjoyed a goodly portion of dignity and honor. Both Greeks and Romans were of the same branch of the great Aryan race, and the indications are that in the earliest times their women enjoyed equal freedom; but Greece, to a certain extent, fell under the influence of Semitic ideas, which saw in the wife a voluptuous possession to be jealously guarded. The Roman woman, on the other hand, was taught to prize and protect her own virtue.

The comparatively free and respected position of the matrons of republican Rome accounts in no small degree for the glory and greatness of the State. Where woman is treated as a slave, there is no genuine love of liberty. Great men can only be born of noble mothers; and nobility, feminine as well as masculine, can only flourish in freedom. Veturia and Cornelia were mistresses in their homes; they knew no restraint in their goings save the requirements of honor, they were respected by their husbands and reverenced by all men; therefore, in ways natural to such mothers, they were able to fit their sons for deeds worthy of men.

In the Roman house there were no secluded women's quarters corresponding to those of eastern nations; and the Roman women walked abroad, frequented the public theatres, and took their places at festive banquets with the men. Conelius Nepos, writing on this subject, says: "What Roman is ashamed to bring his wife to a feast; and does she not occupy the best room in the house, and live in the midst of company? But in Greece the case is far otherwise; for a wife is neither admitted to a feast,

except among relations, nor does she sit anywhere but in the innermost apartment of the house, which is called the gynæconitis, and into which nobody goes who is not connected with her by near relationship." The most important room in the Roman house was the atrium. Here, in the midst of her slaves, the mistress pursued her domestic occupations; here was placed the *lectus genialis* or *adversus,* in ancient times the real, afterward the symbolical, bridal bed, her own proper seat of honor.

Notwithstanding this independent position of the women, Roman marriage, if it be judged by the strict letter of its laws and customs, was not very indulgent to the weaker sex. But, as we have indicated in preceding chapters, the power of the father of the family was much greater in theory than it was in reality. Roman wedlock was of two kinds: *matrimonium justum* and *non justum;* that is, marriage in due form, and marriage without the perfect ceremonies. The first required the right on either side to fulfil a lawful marriage according to the ancient rites. In the earliest times, equality of condition was demanded, patricians and plebeians being allowed to marry only in their own class. After B.C. 445, this restriction was removed; but it was still necessary that both parties to the contract should be citizens. But even in cases where the ancient rites were not permitted, marriage, if it took place, was regarded as none the less lawful and binding. Among the Romans, first cousins were not allowed to marry, though in the days of the emperors the restrictions of consanguinity were not strictly adhered to; Agrippina was married to Claudius, who was her uncle.

A contract of legal marriage was made in three different ways, called, respectively, *usus, confarreatio,* and *coemptio. Usus,* or usage, was when a woman, with the consent of her parents or guardians, lived with a man a whole year

without being absent three consecutive nights. She thus became his wife or his property by prescription. If, however, she absented herself for three nights at any time during the year, the prescription was interrupted; and if the parties desired to renew the relation so interrupted, it was necessary to begin the required year again, dating from the last absence. This very loose bond of matrimony was largely adopted in later times, many women taking the precaution to preserve the opportunity for a permanent release.

The most solemn form of marriage was the *confarreatio*. This was a distinctly religious ceremony and was held to be of a sacramental nature. It was performed by the chief pontiff, and in the presence of at least ten witnesses; a set form of words was used, and a cake made of salt water and flour, called *far,* was tasted by both parties and then offered, together with a sheep, to the deities. By this form of marriage a woman was held to have become wholly in the power or under the hand of her husband. If she committed any fault, he judged and punished her according to his own discretion. There also went with it unusual privileges. Wedded in this manner, a woman became a partner in all her husband's substance and also in the celebration of the sacred household rites. She took part with him in the worship of the household Penates, because she had an equal share in the treasure which they guarded; and in that of the Lares, for her husband's family was now her family and she was a participator in all the glory and renown of his ancestors. If he died intestate and without children, she inherited his whole fortune. If he left offspring, she enjoyed an equal share with them. Marriage by *confarreatio* was always restricted to the patricians; but in after times it fell almost entirely into disuse, so much so that Cicero, in giving the forms of marriage, mentions only *usus* and *coemptio*.

This latter form of marriage was a kind of mutual purchase, in which the man and the woman gave to each other a small piece of money and repeated certain words. The bridegroom asked: "Art thou willing to become the mother of my family?" The bride answered that she was; and then she in turn asked: "Art thou willing to become the father of my family?" to which the man made a like reply.

The Roman maiden did not enjoy that liberty of choice in her wedding which is the prerogative of women among us. She was given in marriage by her parents or guardian to whomsoever they deemed a suitable mate. Even the strong-minded and otherwise independent Agrippina the Elder implored Tiberius to provide her a husband; and because of his failure to do this she was obliged to remain a widow. Still, the Roman woman was in no worse position in this respect than were the maidens of the feudal age, and, in fact, she enjoyed equal freedom with those of some European countries in modern times. At any rate, she was not legally forced into a marriage against her will. Her declared consent was an essential part of the ceremony. Moreover, there seems to be no good reason for doubting that in the Roman world, where social intercourse between the sexes was not greatly restricted, matrimonial unions which were the result of mutual affection were not infrequent. Though in the ancient pictures which represent the marriage ceremony, Juno is shown in the act of introducing the bride and groom to each other, we may be very sure that there were many times when Venus was also present to secure the happy and legal consummation of that which her son Cupid had begun.

Nevertheless, just as in these days, in which there is more talk of unfettered sentiment, in Rome money determined many marriages. Plautus describes a miser lamenting that he has a grown daughter on his hands,

without dowry, whom he cannot portion off to anyone. And Horace says that "Queen Money, when she gives a spouse with an ample dowry, seems to give at the same time beauty, nobility, friends, and conjugal fidelity." Juvenal supposes someone to argue that Cesennia, a woman of his time, is, by her husband's showing, the best of wives. But he answers: "She brought him a thousand sestertia; that is the price at which he calls her chaste. It is not with Venus's quiver that he grows thin, or with her torch that he burns. It is from that his fires are fed; from her dowry it is that the arrows are sent. She has purchased her liberty; therefore, even in her husband's presence she may exchange signals, and answer her billets-doux. A rich wife, with a covetous husband, has all a widow's privileges."

In the early days of the Republic, dowries were very small. The daughters of the greatest men, says Valerius Maximus, often brought nothing in marriage save the glory of their fathers or of their families. Scipio, when commanding in Spain, petitioned the Senate to allow him to return, so that he might arrange the marriage of his daughter. The Senators, in order that the State might not be deprived of the services of so able a general, refused his request, but took upon themselves the duty of marrying the maiden. They chose for her a husband, and assigned to her from the public treasury a marriage portion of eleven thousand ases. This doubtless was at the time considered ample, though Seneca, in the later days of luxury, declared that it would not suffice to purchase a mirror for the daughter of a freedman. In those same early days, when wealth was reckoned in small figures, a woman called Megulla was surnamed Dotata, or "The Great Fortune," because she had fifty thousand ases, less than eight hundred dollars of our money. But

as wealth increased, the marriage portions of the women became correspondingly great, until in the time of Martial a dowry equivalent to three-quarters of a million dollars was not uncommon. The wife's dowry was, of course, at the disposal of her husband; but his right to it ceased in case of the dissolution of the marriage, except when the wife sought divorce without just cause, in which case the husband was allowed to keep a sixth of the dowry for each of their children, to the amount of three-sixths. If, however, the wife died before her husband, and left no children, her dowry reverted to her father, so that he might not suffer the double affliction of losing both his money and his daughter. Sometimes the wife reserved to herself a part of the marriage portion, in order that she might have something to spend for which she had not to give account to her husband; occasionally also, there went with the bride a slave, who, it was stipulated, was not to be subject to the husband's disposal or command. The wife of Apuleius, who married him when she was a widow and possessed four million sesterces in her own right, transferred only three hundred thousand in the marriage settlement. This power of the wife to own personal property of a non-distrainable character afforded the Roman an opportunity, such as is frequently seized to-day by men on the verge of bankruptcy, to secure his assets by making them over to his wife.

It often happened, of course, that a maiden's family, though honorable, was not in such circumstances that she could base her hopes of marriage upon the tempting bait of a rich dowry. Then her personal qualities were her sole reliance. In the later days of the Republic, Roman parents seem to have been fully appreciative of the desirability of a liberal education for their daughters. Even in the most wealthy families, before the days when Roman

society entered upon its decadence, the girls were zealously instructed in those domestic duties which would prepare them to become good housewives. In addition to this, they were thoroughly trained in both Greek and Latin literature, especial attention being given to the poets. Their accomplishments also included music, singing, and dancing; for these, says Statius, helped to procure a husband. But we may be certain that in those times, as in the present, the natural anxiety of many a mother caused her to resort to other arts besides that of music, in order to provide a good match for her none too much sought after daughter. If the comedies are to be credited, that which the father's wealth could not accomplish it was hoped might be attained through the mother's wiles. "Look at the mothers," says one of Terence's characters; "they are carefully occupied in lowering their daughters' shoulders, in drawing in their waists to make them look slender. Is there one of them who is inclined to be stout? The mother immediately exclaims, 'she is an athlete,' and diminishes the girl's meals until, in spite of constitutional tendencies, she has rendered her daughter as thin as a spindle."

A girl, by means of either her real or artificial qualities, has won the regard of some young Roman; let us witness, so far as they may be ascertained from the ancient authors, the ceremonies of her betrothal and nuptials. The consent of the parents of both parties must first be obtained. If the suitor is regarded with favor, the father of the maiden says: "I give up to you my dear daughter, and may it be happy for me, for you, and for her." Then the betrothal or espousal takes place. This is a family festival; everyone connected with the house makes it a holiday. The relatives are invited to share in the rejoicing and also to witness the contract of engagement. The Roman maiden did not engage herself to be married

in the manner Ruskin complained of as characterizing modern times,—by moonlight, starlight, gaslight, candlelight, or anything but daylight. Her engagement was a solemnity which took place under the eyes of all her relatives and as many friends as her father cared and could afford to invite. The inevitable augurs are also present, in order that they may ascertain, by examining the entrails of some bird, whether or not the Fates will be propitious. Their verdict will largely depend upon the manner in which they are treated by the parties concerned; for Cato declared that he never could understand how two members of this profession could look each other in the face without laughing. One wonders if any Roman girl ever availed herself of the science of these gentlemen to escape an undesirable suitor; for in the minds of most of the people the superstition was so firmly implanted that if an augur could have been induced to perceive misfortune in the auspices, that would have been sufficient to prevent the engagement. But we will suppose that the signs are pronounced favorable. A *stipula,* or straw, is broken between the parties, signifying that a contract is made. The agreement is also put in writing, for the sake of future reference. The man gives the maiden a plain iron ring, which he places upon the finger next to the smallest on the left hand, there being a belief that a nerve runs from that finger directly to the heart. He also gives presents to those who have made themselves useful in helping to bring about the engagement, and he receives a present from the girl. The contract of betrothal was not irrevocable; but for either party to withdraw from it was much more likely to result in a suit at law than is the case at the present time; and the Roman had the advantage over the jilted man in our day, in that it was not considered that damages for a breach of promise were properly due only to a woman.

Marriage engagements were frequently of long continuance among the Romans; for sometimes even infants were betrothed. The minimum age at which the marriage could legally take place was twelve for the girl and fourteen for the man.

The selection of the wedding day was a matter in which more than the inclination and the convenience of the parties concerned had to be considered; the important thing was to choose a fortunate day. Ovid says: "There are days when neither widow nor virgin may light the torch of Hymen; she who is married then will surely die." The Calends, the Ides, and the Nones were especially to be avoided. The whole month of May was considered particularly unfavorable, because it was devoted to the propitiation of the Lemurs, or the evil spirits. It was a common saying that no good woman would marry in the month of May. February was also avoided. June, on the contrary, of all the months in the year, was believed to be the most propitious for marriages, but not until after the Ides, or the thirteenth day. Ovid states, on the authority of the wife of the *flamen dialis,* that for a fortunate marriage it was necessary to wait until the refuse from the Temple of Vesta had been carried by the Tiber to the sea; and this was not supposed to be accomplished until the thirteenth of June.

The friends of our couple have decided upon a day which, in the common opinion, has no predilection for mischief. Everything necessary for the performance of the marriage ceremonies is provided. These ceremonies are of the nature of ancient usages rather than legal requirements. They are intensely symbolical, and are calculated to impress upon the minds of the bride and bridegroom a lively sense of the duties belonging to the new relationship into which they are entering.

This Roman bride is relieved of one grave anxiety which usually accompanies the anticipatory pleasure in an approaching modern wedding. It is not necessary for her to give any thought as to the color and fashion of her wedding dress. This was always the same among the Romans; and even if that worn by the maiden whose marriage is now being described should happen to be an heirloom from her great-grandmother, she need not fear that it is out of style. It consists of a long white robe, woven in a particular manner. If the circumstances of her family have improved, she may perhaps sew a purple fringe around the border; but that is absolutely the only change allowed. This robe will be fastened around her waist with a woollen girdle, white wool being always a symbol of chastity. This will be tied in a Hercules knot, to loose which, at the end of the ceremonies, will be the husband's privilege. Her hair, allowed to fall around her shoulders, on the wedding morn is parted with the head of a spear. Plutarch and other writers say that this custom had its origin in the rape of the Sabines, and betokened the fact that the first Roman marriages were brought about by capture, and that it accordingly also indicated that a wife should be in subjection to her husband. Over her head the bride wears a yellow or flame-colored veil, this hue being held to be of good significance. Her brow is also crowned with a chaplet of vervain, gathered and wreathed by her own hands, for this herb signifies fecundity. Her shoes are also of yellow, and so constructed as to make her appear taller than her real height.

Thus attired, the bridal party go first to the temple, for the purpose of offering sacrifice, as Virgil says, "above all, to Juno, whose province is the nuptial tie." The victim considered as most appropriate is a hog; and care is to be taken to throw the gall of the animal as far away as

possible, with the hope that in like manner all bitterness will be put far away from this conjugal union. Then, if the ceremony of *confarreatio* is used, the couple, having returned to the bride's home, are seated side by side, with a sheepskin covering both chairs; by which it is signified that although the man and the woman occupy two different parts of the house, they are nevertheless united by a common bond. The chief priest now gives the wedded pair the sacred cake, which they eat together in token of the fact that they are henceforth to share with each other the necessaries of life. Although the modern wedding cake has developed into something far more elaborate than the simple Roman wafer of flour, water, and salt, the probability is that the former had its origin in the latter.

The appearance of the star Venus in the sky is the signal for the bride's departure to her new home. In a formal manner, her father hands her over to her husband's family, for he only can sever the bond which holds her to his guardianship. Henceforth her husband has the right by law to exercise over her that authority which has been held by her father. There is a pretence made of taking her by force from the arms of her mother or her sisters, in memory of the violent abduction of the Sabine women. Then the bridal party walk in procession to the husband's house. Preceding them, lighting the way, are four married women carrying torches. The bride is directly attended by three boys, in selecting whom the important thing to be borne in mind is to take only those who have both parents living, otherwise it would be an extremely bad omen. Two of these support her by the arms, while the other carries a flambeau of white pine before her to dissipate all lurking enchantments and dispel all evil incantations. Then follow maid-servants with a distaff, a spindle,

and wool, intimating that she is to labor at spinning, as did the Roman matrons of the old time. After these comes a boy, who for this occasion is named Camillus; his office is to carry in an open basket other instruments for feminine work; and especially it has been remembered to include playthings and toys for the bride's prospective children. All the relatives and friends join in this festive procession. In place of the rice which in these days accompanies the adieus bestowed on a newly wedded pair, the Roman bride was the target for all the jests and raillery which the wit of the spectators might suggest. When she reaches her new home, the bridegroom, standing in the doorway, which is decked with garlands of flowers, inquires who she is. Her reply is: "Where thou art Caius, there am I Caia;" thus beautifully intimating that comradeship in all things which is the ideal of marriage. Then, after the bride has anointed the doorposts with the fat of swine in order to turn away all enchantments, she is lifted over the threshold, which, being consecrated to Vesta, it would be a bad omen for the bride to touch with her foot. Her husband now presents her with the keys, for she is henceforth to be intrusted with the management of his house. Both touch fire and water, in token that they together share these essentials of life and well-being. A yoke is placed about their necks, symbolizing that which they have taken upon themselves in their marriage; from this comes the word *conjugium*. The first joint act of the bride and bridegroom is to unite in the worship of the household gods, the husband thus introducing his wife to the guardian spirits of his home—the most sacred things of his family. She is henceforth to be associated with him in his domestic worship, and she has become a sharer in the inheritance of fame left by his ancestors, who are venerated in the adoration of their Manes.

These solemn observances being ended, now follows the banquet. At this, the bride reclines on the same divan with her husband at the head of the table; for she is already hostess where he is host. Now has come the opportunity for boisterous hilarity. The solemnities are all completed, and the remaining time is wholly given up to the merriment which is always deemed a fitting accompaniment to the first adventure of a couple among the changes and chances of the marriage state. All the guests join in singing the Thalassius,—a chant in which every bridegroom is congratulated on being as fortunate in his lot as was that traditional Quirite who obtained the brightest flower of the Sabine maidens.

The banquet being ended, the bride is conducted by the matrons to the nuptial chamber, which is always the atrium, or the central room of the house. Here is placed the *lectus genialis,* richly adorned and covered with flowers. The bridegroom throws nuts among his former companions, as a sign that he is now forsaking the life of his boyhood for the responsibilities of man's estate. After his departure, the young people entertain the newly married couple by singing outside the door fescennine verses, in which is indulged a liberty of expression to which modern ears are unaccustomed.

Commonly, the songs chanted at the celebration of Roman marriages had no literary merit whatever, and were chiefly characterized by their grossness; but sometimes these occasions inspired the genius of the best poets, from which resulted some of the most beautiful Latin verse. Catullus has three such pieces. In his *Nuptial Song,* youths and maidens are represented as contending with each other in improvised versification. Hesperus, the evening star, is reproached by the virgins and lauded by the young men as being the signal for the bride to

leave her mother's arms for those of her husband. In the last chorus, both parties unite in exhorting the young wife to use complaisance with her husband, and not to "strive against two parents who have bestowed their own rights along with thy dowry on their son-in-law." *The Marriage of Peleus and Thetis*, the longest of the poems of Catullus, may not have been intended to be sung at a wedding; though that is a question on which classic scholars are not agreed. It treats of marriage, however, in a very interesting and original fashion; and may throw some light on Roman customs, notwithstanding the fact that the characters introduced are the offspring of the gods. "The mansion, in every part of its opulent interior, glitters with shining gold and silver; white are the ivory seats; goblets gleam on the tables; the whole dwelling rejoices in the splendor of regal wealth. In the midst of the mansion is placed the genial couch of the goddess, inlaid with polished Indian tooth, and covered with purple dyed with the shell's rosy juice. This coverlet, diversified with figures of the men of yore, portrays the virtues of heroes with wondrous art." Then follows the principal part of the poem, which is a description of the pictures worked upon the tapestry of the bed. The subject of these is the history of Ariadne. We are to imagine the poet standing by the couch and pointing out the incidents portrayed, with their causes and consequences. This being concluded, the gods, and especially the Parcæ, are introduced to the marriage feast; and the latter, as they spin their thread, "utter soothsaying canticles."

Catullus has given us a veritable example of the Roman wedding song in his epithalamium on the marriage of Manlius and Julia. Of this Julia we know nothing further than that she was of the Cotta family; Manlius was of the illustrious lineage of the Torquati. If only there were

historic warrant for believing that this couple were as charming in their personalities as they are described in this poem, and that all the good wishes therein expressed did really materialize, the marriage of Manlius and Julia might stand for all time as the *summum bonum* of wedded felicity. A few stanzas from Lamb's translation will serve to illustrate the character of the epithalamium, and will also fairly indicate the place and nature of sentiment in the Roman conception of the marriage relation.

"When Venus claim'd the golden prize,
And bless'd the Phrygian shepherd's eyes;
No brighter charms his judgment sway'd
Than those that grace this mortal maid;
And every sigh and omen fair
The nuptials hail, and greet the pair.

. . .

"Propitiate here the maiden's vows,
And lead her fondly to her spouse;
And firm as ivy clinging holds
The tree it grasps in mazy folds,
Let virtuous love as firmly bind
The tender passions of her mind.

"Ye virgins, whom a day like this
Awaits to greet with equal bliss,
Oh! join the song, your voices raise
To hail the god we love to praise.
O Hymen! god of faithful pairs;
O Hymen! hear our earnest prayers.

. . .

"Invoked by sires with anxious fear,
Their children's days with bliss to cheer;
By maidens, who to thee alone
Unloose the chaste, the virgin zone;
By fervid bridegrooms, whose delight
Is stay'd till thou hast bless'd the rite.

. . .

"Raise, boys, the beaming torches high!
She comes—but veil'd from every eye;
The deeper dyes her blushes hide;
With songs, with pæans greet the bride!

Hail, Hymen! god of faithful pairs,
Hail, Hymen! who hast heard our prayers.

. . .

"Riches, and power, and rank, and state,
With Manlius' love thy days await;
These all thy youth shall proudly cheer,
And these shall nurse thy latest year.
Hail, Hymen! god of faithful pairs!
Hail, Hymen! who hast heard our prayers.

. . .

"Oh! boundless be your love's excess,
And soon our hopes let children bless;
Let not this ancient honor'd name
Want heirs to guard its future fame;
Nor any length of years assign
A limit to the glorious line.

"Let young Torquatus' look avow
All Manlius' features in his brow;
That those, who know him not, may trace
The knowledge of his noble race;
And by his lineal brow declare
His lovely mother chaste as fair.

"Now close the doors, ye maiden friends;
Our sports, our rite, our service ends.
With you let virtue still reside,
O bridegroom brave, and gentle bride,
And youth its lusty hours employ
In constant love and ardent joy."

The bluntly practical disposition of the Romans reveals itself even in their attitude toward that phase of human life which preëminently furnished scope for romance. In their expressions concerning marriage, its physical basis is acknowledged with unnecessary frankness. No vestige is found among them of any pretence of belief in that exalted communion which, though it is probably nothing more than an imaginary refinement, is commonly talked of as Platonic love. There is no idealizing of the amatory emotions,—such as we are accustomed to in novels which

are not "realistic,"—thereby affording an opportunity to ignore the lower aspect.

A woman, after marriage, retained her former name; but it was joined to that of her husband, as, for example, Julia Pompeii, Terentia Ciceronis. She was also called *domina,* the mistress. On the day after her marriage, the Roman bride, by a sacrifice which she offered to the Lares, formally took possession of her position as mistress of the household. Then she assumed the control of the servants and slaves, setting them their tasks and taking upon herself the superintendence of all things in the home. By unwritten law, no servile work was required of the Roman matron, unless she were so poor as not to own a slave. She might spin, and, indeed, it was to her credit if she thus diligently employed herself, for this was an occupation which the most cherished traditions would not permit the noblest to despise. It was carried on in the atrium, where the matron sat surrounded by her husband's ancestral images and where she received her friends. When she went abroad, she was known to be a matron because of her *stola;* the inner side of the walk was given to her by every Roman citizen she might happen to meet; and if anything indecent was said or done in her presence, it was an offence which might be punished by law.

In the earliest times, the dissolution of the marriage bond was of extremely rare occurrence, for the praiseworthy reason that the manners of the people were such that there seldom arose an occasion for divorce. In those first ages, however, the laws concerning this matter were characterized by an exceeding severity and unfairness to the woman. In no case was she allowed to divorce her husband; though she might be put away by him, not only for conjugal infidelity and such crimes as using drugs to prevent the possibility of childbearing, or for deceiving him

by the introduction of fictitious children, but even if she counterfeited his keys or surreptitiously drank his wine, and, in the earliest times, if she drank wine at all. Carvilius is said to have been the first Roman to put away his wife; but it is difficult to believe that, notwithstanding the fact that laws providing for such a proceeding existed from the time of the kingdom, no divorce really took place until B.C. 231. Probably certain circumstances connected with this divorce gave it such notoriety that it was the first which impressed itself upon the attention of the historians. It is said that Carvilius, though he loved his wife, divorced her on account of barrenness, he having, with many other citizens, made a vow to marry for the sake of offspring.

In later times, the women gained the right to secure divorce; and as morals began to show the signs of decadence, there was nothing so indicative of the terrible laxity which prevailed as the trivial causes for which husbands and wives were allowed to separate. Incompatibility of temperament was the common complaint. In the ancient and nobler times, there was a small temple dedicated to Viriplaca, the marital peacemaker; and when a difference occurred between husband and wife, they met and entered into explanations before the goddess, usually with the result of a restoration of harmony; but Viriplaca was gradually forgotten, and matrimonial chaos ensued.

When this laxity came to be the prevailing rule, the wife who was rich and, moreover, inclined to be in any way disagreeable held her husband at her mercy. If he divorced her without any considerable fault of hers, or if they parted by mutual consent, she took her dowry and left him with the children. If, as was very likely to be the case, he had married her for her property, he was

obliged to be submissive. Plautus says: "The portionless wife is subject to her husband's will; wives with dowries are as executioners for their husbands." Martial, inveighing against a miserly woman who will not furnish her husband with a new cloak as a New Year's gift, says: "Why, Proculeia, do you cast off your husband in the month of January? This is not in your case a divorce; it is a good stroke of business." During the worst times, the law restricted the number of divorces obtainable by an individual to eight. If we are to believe Juvenal, there were women who were sufficiently enterprising to reach the limit in five years. The satirist describes them as leaving the doors only recently adorned, the tapestry used for the marriage festival still hanging on the house, and the branches still green upon the threshold. Seneca says that in his time it had come to such a pass that women reckoned the years, not by the names of the consuls, but by the husbands they had divorced.

Yet, notwithstanding—perhaps it would be more correct to say, on account of—this excessive willingness on the part of the women to enter into contracts of marriage, it became necessary in the time of the first empire to decree severe penalties against celibacy; and bonuses were awarded to those in whose families children were born. Even as early as B. C. 121, Metellus the Censor, complaining in the Senate of the increasing tendency to avoid the responsibilities of matrimony, said: "Could we exist without wives at all, doubtless we should rid ourselves of the plague they are to us; since, however, nature has decreed that we cannot dispense with the infliction, it is best to bear it manfully, and rather look to the permanent conservation of the State than to our own passing comfort."

In a condition of society in which the most conspicuous women were unrestrained by any worthy ideals of

the responsibilities of wifehood, and where men were at liberty, and found abundant opportunity, to gratify their basest propensities with no fear of any reproof other than being made the subject of humorous allusion, it is not to be wondered at that the latter were inclined to shun the cares and the vicissitudes of marriage. Juvenal claimed that a good wife was rarer than a white crow; and Pliny held that celibacy alone afforded an unobstructed road to power and fortune. The former's terrible sixth satire was written as a warning against matrimony. "And yet you are preparing your marriage covenant, and the settlement, and betrothal, in our days; and are already under the hands of the master barber, and perhaps have already given the pledge for her finger. Well, you used to be sane, at all events! You, Postumus, going to marry! Say, what Tisiphone, what snakes, are driving you mad? Can you submit to be the slave of any woman, while so many halters are to be had? so long as high and dizzy windows are accessible, and the Æmilian bridge presents itself so near at hand?" The women are accused of every enormity known in that Rome where vice attained such proportions as have never been approached in any civilization in the history of the world. But it is contrary to the office of the satirist to present a true picture of the whole. Writing of vice, he sees nothing but iniquity; of the good he has nothing to say, for it is not in his province. That even then there were good women we know full well. Julia, the aunt of Cæsar; Octavia, faithful to her marriage vows despite the ill returns she received from Mark Antony; Agrippina, the beloved and faithful wife of the noble Germanicus; Livia also, the wife of Augustus, whose matrimonial fidelity—whatever may have been her character in other respects—no suspicion ever assailed. If these women, in their high stations, could exemplify all

the best traditions of the matrons of the old time, we may be sure that there were innumerable good wives in the commoner ranks.

Out on the Appian Way, there is to be seen one of the strangest monuments that a grotesque fancy ever devised. It is the tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces, who was baker to the *apparetores*. The monument consists of a row of great cylinders representing measures for grain. Upon these, in three tiers, are huge kneading troughs, placed with their mouths turned outward. Above is a frieze representing various incidents connected with the baker's trade. There is evidence that originally there was a similar monument standing by the side of this, for an inscription was found which reads: *Antistia was my wife; she was the best woman alive; of whose body the remains which are left are in this bread basket.* Here was a man of the people who appreciated his wife. Doubtless Antistia was a good woman, and lived happily with the baker, just as there were myriads of other faithful pairs whose names are not recorded on monuments nor have any place in history.

And yet, even the highest Roman standards of morality were not such as have been evolved through many centuries of inculcation of Christian principles. Among the best of the pagan Romans, concubinage was looked upon as a defensible institution. The laws in regard to citizenship shut out a large class of women from the privilege of marriage with freeborn Romans; as, for instance, the daughters of foreigners who had not been naturalized. These could only become mistresses or enter into left-handed marriages. If a citizen who was unmarried wished to live with such a woman, of course no ceremony was needed; there was nothing binding about the union, and at the same time it was not considered to be in any wise

indecent. On more than one tomb there is found an inscription to "the beloved concubine." Acte held this relationship with the Emperor Nero; and to her credit it surely must be allowed that she was the only person near him against whom he did not maliciously turn, and who seemed to have with him some slight influence for good. Antoninus Pius, one of the very best of the Roman emperors, when his beloved Faustina died, took a concubine. He would not marry again, because he did not wish to bring his four children under the uncertain care of a stepmother. And having before him the domestic history of more than one imperial family in which were exhibited the tender mercies of such a stepmother as was Livia the wife of Augustus, Antoninus may well be excused for his precaution. What was the name of the woman he took we do not know, nor are we informed as to her character; only, Marcus Aurelius says: "I am thankful to the gods that I was not longer brought up with my father's concubine."

Chapter VI

Woman under Julius Cæsar

VI

WOMAN UNDER JULIUS CÆSAR

ROME was now riven and torn by cataclysms of civil strife. The foundations of the Republic were shaken by the explosion of new social forces, the growth of which was naturally attendant upon the spread of conquest, and which could no longer be confined within the narrow limits of the old constitution. Marius, Sylla, Pompey, and Cæsar—these are the names around which gathers the history of the pains and death groans of the expiring Republic. Crimson was the color of each political party; and the blood of opponents was the means used for its exhibition. Rome had become too great for her ancient civic constitution: she was restlessly awaiting the arrival of a man who could thrust himself above all opposition, and in his own person unify the government. Imperialism or anarchy must necessarily follow such a Republic as Rome had become in the closing century of the pre-Christian era.

During those fierce political disturbances and bloody revolutions, how did woman fare? She was by no means secure in that quiet, unmolested round of conjugal duty and domestic life which had so long been hers by right. In the sanguinary civil wars and murderous proscriptions which resulted from the ambitions of the leaders, life for

the Roman people was of extremely uncertain tenure. It is easy to surmise what the women of many Italian cities suffered when whole populations were put to the sword under the merciless Sylla. Death, outrage, and slavery became so common that there was developed in the Roman women that indifference to the sight of human suffering which appears to us as nothing less than monstrous. Under Sylla, wives were accustomed to being simultaneously robbed of their husbands and their sustenance; as in the case of that peaceful citizen who, finding his own name in the lists of the proscribed, exclaimed: "My Alban farm has informed against me," and was immediately thereafter slain.

The political changes of the time wrought no marked alteration in the status of the women; that is, no legislation was enacted which, in any special manner, bore upon their condition and privileges. Certain developments did take place in the manner of life of the women of Rome; but these were the natural results of the character of the times. The weakening of moral principle which we have noticed in a preceding chapter continued with accelerated rapidity. The bounds set by traditional honor were overthrown with increasing recklessness, and the habits of many of the upper-class women carried the sex still further beyond the limits of old-fashioned morality.

In this period we also see the women beginning to lay their hands to that particular sort of political work to which they are adapted. In the days of the Gracchi, it had become possible for a bright and intellectual lady to draw around her learned men, grammarians, and philosophers; we shall now see such women, who have other ambitions, gathering politicians, and sometimes conspirators, in their atriums. There was Sempronia, for example, who was of the family of the Gracchi and the wife of

Decimus Brutus. In her house Catiline was in the habit of meeting his followers for the purpose of plotting his conspiracy. Of her character and attainments Sallust gives us this interesting description: "A woman who had committed many crimes, with the spirit of a man. In birth and beauty, in her husband and her children, she was extremely fortunate; she was skilled in Greek and Roman literature; she could sing, play, and dance, with greater elegance than became a woman of virtue, and possessed many other accomplishments that tend to excite the passions. But nothing was ever less valued by her than honor or chastity. Whether she was more prodigal of her money or her reputation, it would have been difficult to decide. She had frequently, before this period, forfeited her word, forsworn debts, been privy to murder, and hurried into the utmost excesses by her extravagances and poverty. But her abilities were by no means despicable; she could compose verses, jest, and join in conversation either modest, tender, or licentious. In a word, she was distinguished by much refinement of wit and much grace of expression." She seems to have been the equal of Cornelia in ability, and her reverse in character; which, perhaps, illustrates the degeneracy of the times as much as it does the special turpitude of this particular woman.

The Romans were learning the political uses of a salon. The women began to acquire the knowledge that, for those who have access to the powerful male leaders, much may be accomplished by a fair face if backed by an active brain, even though the ballot be denied. The way was being prepared for a Livia and an Agrippina. The women were forced to take a greater interest in politics, for the simple reason that politics had become a most hazardous business. Their husbands might be riding in triumph one day, and finding their names in the lists

of the proscribed the next; hence, it often happened that only by mingling in political intrigues could the wives secure their own safety and that of those to whom they were united by affection. The times had changed. In the old days, the women were accustomed, with patriotic ardor, to encourage their male relatives as they marched out against the public enemy, and they bravely devoted their sons to the welfare of the State; but in the times of which we are now treating, those did the best service who possessed the wit to discover a plot. It was to a courtesan named Fulvia that Cicero was indebted for the detection of the Catiline conspiracy.

In the general estimation of the men, however, the chief political use which women might serve was to reinforce, by marriage, the strained relations between rival politicians. Accordingly, the daughter of a powerful leader would be married and divorced, passed from one man to another, with almost as much facility as a detachment of light cavalry might appear first in one part and then in another of a battlefield. These enforced marriages for political purposes had the effect of so training the women that, in the succeeding generations, they could with all the greater levity sever the bonds of matrimony for their own capricious ends. With what nonchalant freedom women made such entrance into the hazardous arena of public life is indicated in the story of Valeria. She was a sprightly young lady, who had been divorced from her husband. One day, in the theatre, as she passed behind Sylla on the way to her seat, she stopped for a moment and plucked a little bit of wool from the dictator's cloak. This caused him to turn and regard her with some wonderment. Whereupon she said: "Surely, sir, you cannot object if in picking a little thread from your garment I also desired to share a small portion of your good fortune."

She went on to her seat; but it soon became apparent that Sylla was not displeased. During the performance, the lady was of more interest to him than the gladiatorial spectacle, and it was not long before a marriage was arranged.

This made the fifth time that Sylla had wedded. Just previously to his thus romantically making the acquaintance of Valeria he had lost by death Cæcilia Metella, to whom reference has heretofore been made, and who was one of the best women of her time. Kind and compassionate by nature, she often successfully interceded for the lives of men whom her relentless husband had foredoomed. At her death, though there is every indication that he held her in the highest regard, his action was peculiar and extremely characteristic of the man. Because the priest of Venus Victrix, to which goddess he was especially devoted, forbade him to allow his house to be polluted by mourning, while Metella was on her deathbed he sent her a bill of divorce and caused her to be removed to the home of one of her relatives. Yet, after her death he went so far as to transgress his own law against funeral expense, and provided the most elaborate obsequies in her honor.

Sylla was absolutely without conscience in his employment of marriage and divorce for political ends. Metella's daughter by her first husband had been married to Glabrio the Censor. The dictator saw a more useful ally in young Cnæus Pompeius, who was already married to Antistia; therefore, he commanded Glabrio and Pompeius to divorce their wives, and the latter to take Æmilia, his stepdaughter. Piso, also at his suggestion, had divorced his wife Annia. But when Sylla attempted to employ the same tactics with Cæsar, he made the discovery that he had encountered a man of altogether different metal. The latter had married Cornelia, the daughter of Cinna. They had one child, a

little daughter named Julia, who afterward became the wife of Pompey. When Cæsar was ordered by the all-powerful dictator to divorce Cornelia, he absolutely refused, preferring death to subjection to such tyranny. There is every warrant for belief that Cornelia was worthy of the devotion of her husband, which she enjoyed to the day of her death.

Cæsar was a turning point in the course of Roman history, a crisis in the history of the world. His labors affected an epoch, and the tragedy of his passing is a memory which can never be relinquished by the human mind. Yet, inasmuch as a man's greatness is always in large measure attributable to the character of the times in which he lives, the same conditions which he seizes to raise himself to the highest position serve also to surround him with other men who approach him in that wisdom, strength, and valor which are developed by the common environment. Cæsar was first in a community of heroic souls. Pompey, Mark Antony, Brutus, Cato, and Cassius, all exhibit in their character and their powers a greater or lesser participation in those qualities which made Cæsar preëminent. This is none the less true also of the women of the day; the times wrought greatness of soul in them to as liberal a degree as in the men. Hazard, ambition, and high enterprise carried the women of this period far in the development of those qualities which are brought out by such means. Portia, Calpurnia, Fulvia, Julia, and Cornelia were fit companions for their renowned masculine associates.

Hence, independent of how little or how much the feminine participants in this great world-drama may appear upon the stage, we may be certain that when they are seen we have before us some of the most remarkable women in history, if for no other reason than that they are connected with the plot of that drama.

The attention is naturally first drawn to those women who were most intimately connected with Julius Cæsar. To Aurelia, the daughter of M. Aurelius Cotta, was destined the honor of bringing into the world the man who was to bear one of the three most renowned names in its military history. She lost her husband, Caius Julius, while their son was yet a boy; but, from what is known of her character, it is evident that she was not unequal to the task of superintending alone the completion of young Cæsar's education. It was undoubtedly to her influence that he owed the development of those traits which are most pleasing in his greatness. Tacitus is sufficient authority for this, likening as he does Aurelia to the mother of the Gracchi. She was one of the few surviving representatives of that matronal dignity and virtue which beautified the austerity of the earlier days of the Republic. Her house, small and frugally managed, was situated under the Esquiline and Viminal hills, in that low part of Rome called the Subura. It was not a fashionable quarter; in fact, it was a street of shops and taverns. It resounded with the clamor of traffic and the noise of such broils and revelry as are usual in the vicinity of pothouses. At the top of the street, there was a depressed, open space, called the Lacus Orphei because of a statue of Orpheus which stood there. To this spot, which must have made an admirable playground, Aurelia was in the habit of sending a slave to look for the young Cæsar when the shades of night fell on the unlighted streets. It is also likely that she as frequently, and with much more satisfaction, caused him to be looked for in the Vicus Sandaliarius, a street running parallel with her own, where were the booksellers' shops.

In her unpretentious residence, with its plebeian surroundings, Aurelia kept house for her son. When he

brought home Cornelia, the daughter of Cinna the Consul, as his bride, his mother decked the threshold and prepared the modest atrium for the nuptial ceremonies. Here was born the little Julia, the only child that ever blessed the home of Cæsar.

When the order came from Sylla that, if he would preserve his life and serve his best interests, Cæsar must put away his wife so as to be free to form a matrimonial union with the dictator's party, there is no doubt that Aurelia's virtuous counsel supported her son's courage in refusing to comply with so tyrannical a command. The result was that Cæsar was obliged to leave the city, hardly escaping the assassin's hand; and the two women were left for two years to comfort each other as best they could in the absence of a husband and a son. That they were impoverished by the rapacious Sylla—who, when he could not touch the person of an enemy, contented himself with seizing his property—we know. Fortunate were they if their lives were not still more embittered by the knowledge of those vile slanders which came from Bithynia, for the disproof of which there is no evidence needed beside the character of him whose name was so maliciously besmirched.

After two years of loneliness, these devoted women were made happy by receiving the exile home. From that time on, Aurelia's maternal pride was satisfied by beholding the star of her son's fortunes, though at times beclouded by rivalry, always ascending and brightening. He rose from one office to another, until the day came when she saw him elected chief pontiff over the heads of two candidates who were his superiors in age, rank, and wealth. On this election he had staked everything. If he failed, his debts would overwhelm him. In the morning, as he left the little house in the Subura, kissing his mother

good-bye, he had said: "Mother, I will return home pontiff, or not at all." How anxiously she must have awaited the result! All through the day, she heard his name shouted with approbation by the people on the street; and in the evening, he returned to inform her that she must move with him to the palace of the pontificate on the Via Sacra.

Cornelia was no longer there to share in Aurelia's pride and Cæsar's good fortune. During the year B. C. 68, Cæsar had pronounced two funeral panegyrics. One was for his aunt, Julia, the wife of that unpolished but indomitable soldier, Marius. Little is known of this lady; but at Les Baux, in Provence, there is a monument on which are represented Marius and Julia, and between them—suggestive it may be of private trials endured by the latter—Martha, the Syrian prophetess, who accompanied and advised Marius in all his adventurous undertakings. The second funeral oration delivered by Cæsar was for his faithful wife Cornelia. Matrons so young as she were not often honored with a panegyric at their obsequies; and it testifies no less to the worth of her character than to her husband's devotion that he, in this instance, transgressed the custom with the approval of the people.

It was not long, however, before Aurelia was called upon to welcome a new bride of her son, this time to the magnificence of the pontifical abode. Marriage was looked upon by the best Romans as a citizen's duty; and for a man to abbreviate his widowed regrets was not regarded as censurable conduct; though, on the other hand, the constancy of widowed matrons was held in the highest honor. The Romans, notwithstanding their aptitude for law, cared little for consistency in their distribution of privileges between men and women.

Cæsar's second wife was Pompeia, the granddaughter of Sylla, whose family Aurelia had but little cause to love.

What the mother's attitude toward the new bride was we do not know. Two things are certain from the narrative of the sequel to this marriage: Aurelia continued to maintain the position of *domina* in the house of her son, for it was she who had charge of the ceremonies of the Bona Dea which Clodius interrupted by his intrusion; and the inferences are all against the innocence of Pompeia, for, had she been faithful, Clodius would not have ventured into the house at such a time. She was divorced by Cæsar; but he took no active part in the proceedings against Clodius. When called upon to testify, he contented himself with the declaration that he knew nothing about the affair; which was true in a sense, inasmuch as he was not present. The matter might have been hushed, had it not been for the matrons, who could not brook that their sacred mysteries should be thus invaded. Terentia, the wife of Cicero, was especially persistent. She was a woman who interfered in political matters to such a degree that, when her husband was consul, she was spoken of sarcastically as being his colleague. Having a private grudge against Clodius, she so incited Cicero that the powerful advocate completely refuted the defendant's strong plea of an alibi.

Cæsar's testimony that he was uninformed as to what had happened at his house was not satisfactory to the prosecutor, who shrewdly inquired: "Why, then, did you divorce Pompeia?" The reply was: "Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion!"—a reply haughty enough to be characteristic of the man, and deemed a sufficient check to all further cross-examination. But, viewing the whole situation from our standpoint, it is impossible to refrain from the comment that, if Cæsar had been equipped with anything corresponding to a modern conscience, he could scarcely have had the effrontery to utter such a saying.

Just and generous as he was, he was incapable of entertaining the idea that there should be but one code of morals for the woman and the man. If Cæsar's wife had said: "The husband of Pompeia must be above suspicion," it would have appeared as ridiculous to her contemporaries as it was impossible of realization.

We may well give as little heed as did Cæsar himself to the calumnious stigma upon his name which disgraces the pages of the historians and the verse of Catullus. Yet, setting this aside as unworthy of credence, evidence seems to prove abundantly his propensity for those gallantries which were considered among the least reprehensible immoralities by the men of his time. The names of many women were connected with that of the great soldier in a manner which is detrimental to the reputation of all concerned. Unless higher criticism of a most radical and partial kind is adopted in the study of the ancient historians, we must take their word that ladies of the highest quality surrendered to Cæsar's attractions. It is said that Pompey was wont to refer to the chief pontiff as Ægisthus; and that when he spoke of him it was with a sigh which was elicited not so much on account of Cæsar's greater success in affairs of State as by his rivalry in the affections of Mucia, who, like Clytemnestra, was won by the pontiff while her husband was absent in war. Posthumia, wife of Servius Sulpicius, Lollia, wife of Aulus Gabinius, and Tertulla, wife of Marcus Crassus, come under the same indictment. The husbands named were close friends of the man who shared with them in their conjugal rights, as well as climbed over their shoulders in political ascendency; and they served him well in the furtherance of his latter-mentioned projects. It has been argued that if Cæsar's conduct had really been as blameworthy as is alleged, he could not have retained the amity

of these men; but the argument proves nothing. What if he were a sufficient adept in policy—a thing not unknown in the history of human experience—to be able to command the hands and the heads of the husbands through the hearts of their wives?

There was one woman who had for Cæsar a passionate attachment which was returned by him with an ardent and lasting affection in which political ambition played no part. This was Servilia, the half-sister of Cato and the mother of Marcus Brutus. Unfortunately, this lady's regard for her powerful lover did not carry with it the confidence and the friendship of her brother and her son. Modern writers, notably Froude and Baring Gould, strive to eliminate everything of an unworthy nature from the mutual affection which is known to have existed between Servilia and Cæsar; but their argument is devoid of historical proof. Much as we may be inclined to eradicate from the character of the great Roman everything that is unpleasant, it will not do to ignore or explain away every tittle of evidence that has been handed down by the ancient authorities on this subject. It may have been but the unfounded surmise of the gossips that it was a billet-doux from his sister which caused Cato to demand of Cæsar, during an acrimonious Senatorial debate, that he make known the contents of a note the latter had just received; nevertheless, we have it on the authority of Plutarch that Cæsar believed Brutus to be his own son. In this the great Imperator may very easily have been mistaken; but as to the fact that he had reason to believe in the possibility of such a thing, surely the conclusions of modern writers should have less weight than the plain statements of the ancient historians, which are the sole and only source of any knowledge whatsoever that we may have on the subject. It is true that slanderers were even

coarser-minded and less restrained among the Romans of those days than they are in our own time; and among them Cicero was as preëminently conscienceless as he was clever. Hence, it is not necessary for us to take seriously his pun on the name of Servilia's daughter, when, remarking on the low price at which Servilia obtained some lands from Cæsar, he says: "Between ourselves, Tertia [or, a third] was deducted," intimating that the mother profited by her daughter's dishonor.

Calpurnia, the daughter of L. Calpurnius Piso, was the third wife of Cæsar. For fourteen years she occupied the Regia, the pontifical residence, as its *domina*. Thus she was the highest lady in Rome and in the Empire. That she became the consort of Cæsar for reasons of expediency is very probable; but that she was possessed of a deep and lasting affection for her husband, which was reciprocated by him with tender regard, is shown by their conduct on the eve of his death. During the years of Calpurnia's union with Cæsar, though he crowded them with events of tremendous import in the history of Rome, nothing whatever is recorded of his wife. Her name has come down to us untarnished with any scandal; which, considering the fact that the historians of that time incorporated such stories in their records on the least possible warrant, is a very strong testimony to the purity of her life, which was devoted to furthering the interests of Cæsar among his friends, caring for his home during his many and lengthened absences, and ministering to his comfort in the short respites which his innumerable cares afforded him. All that we really know of her character is revealed in his time of danger, in which everything is to her credit.

In the plot of *Julius Cæsar*, Shakespeare, with historical accuracy, introduces only two feminine characters: Calpurnia and Portia, the latter the worthy wife of the

noblest of the conspirators. Were they friends, these two ladies, as their husbands were supposed to be? Did they visit each other and engage in the discussion of those topics which were then current in the atriums and gardens of Rome? Did Calpurnia sometimes spend an afternoon with Portia in her house on the Aventine; and though somewhat chilled by the austere and philosophical demeanor of the descendant of the Censor, yet cordially invite her to the more magnificent palace of Cæsar? This we do not know. Possibly the terrible event which was in store cast a shadow upon any intercourse which the women may have had; especially since Cato, the brother of Portia, had found in Calpurnia's marriage occasion for denunciation, for the reason that her father was immediately thereupon made consul.

Of the two women, Portia is much the better known; and, though she may not really have been superior to the wife of Cæsar, she may justly be taken as the best representative of the noblest type of Roman matron of that period. In her we see the effect of stoical training on the character of a normal woman. There have been many women of greater firmness of mind, more self-control, more power to witness and take part in fearsome deeds without a tremor of the lips or a blanching of the countenance. These are abnormal women, in whose character nature had mingled an undue amount of the masculine element. But in Portia we have no Lady Macbeth; she did not and could not have instigated her husband to bloody deeds. Her character was of itself gentle and most womanly; her conduct was the result of education. She herself admitted that, if she were stronger than her sex, it was the result of being "so father'd and so husbanded." Her philosophy taught her to strive for stoical firmness, but she ever found in herself nothing but a

woman's strength. This is seen in the historian's account, and is wonderfully brought out by Shakespeare in the scene in which he portrays her almost dying for news from the Capitol.

"PORTIA.—I prithee, boy, run to the senate-house;
Stay not to answer me, but get thee gone:
Why dost thou stay?
LUCIUS.—To know my errand, madam.
PORTIA.—I would have had thee there, and here again,
Ere I can tell thee what thou shouldst do there.—
O constancy, be strong upon my side!
Set a huge mountain 'tween my heart and tongue!
I have a man's mind, but a woman's might.
How hard it is for women to keep counsel!—
Art thou here yet?
LUCIUS.—Madam, what should I do?
Run to the Capitol, and nothing else?
And so return to you, and nothing else?
PORTIA.—Yes, bring me word, boy, if thy lord look well,
For he went sickly forth: and take good note
What Cæsar doth, what suitors press to him.
Hark, boy! what noise is that?
LUCIUS.—I hear none, madam.
PORTIA.— Prithee, listen well;
I heard a bustling rumour, like a fray,
And the wind brings it from the Capitol."

Then, after the conversation with the soothsayer:

"I must go in.—Ay me, how weak a thing
The heart of woman is! O Brutus,
The heavens speed thee in thine enterprise!—
Sure, the boy heard me.—Brutus hath a suit,
That Cæsar will not grant.—O, I grow faint:—
Run, Lucius, and commend me to my lord;
Say, I am merry: come to me again,
And bring me word what he doth say to thee."

All this feeling and acute anxiety she doubtless underwent; not, however, from sympathy with the motive and purpose of Brutus, though she believed in these as fully

as he did, but for sheer and simple love of her husband. By nature she was no stoic—as no true woman has ever been or can be; but she had trained herself in the estimation of self-control and dignified endurance as moral excellences of the highest value. There were other women in Rome who, like Portia, had studied and adopted as their rule of life the principles of Zeno. We can see them walking amidst the frivolity of their times with the hauteur of too conscious superiority. It was a part which, if taken up by women at all, they must necessarily overdo. The principles of their philosophy might carry them far, even to death "after the high Roman fashion"; but whether the stoicism was only a mask of pride or a real grandeur of character, there was always some point at which the woman's heart showed itself. A man, whether bent on sentimental or serious purposes, needed not to stand greatly in awe of those stoical Roman ladies.

School herself in dignified impassiveness as she might, every thought of Portia's mind, as well as every impulse of her heart, betrayed her philosophy. Her affectionate solicitude allowed no sigh escaping the breast of her lord, no absent-mindedness clouding his brow and boding care, to escape her observation. It was plain to her that Brutus had some great trouble weighing upon his mind. She longed to share its knowledge, not for the gratification of curiosity, but because she could not endure to be deemed by her husband anything less than his loyal comrade. But was she worthy to be the custodian of her husband's secrets? Doubtless she was assured that they related to State affairs. It was not the custom among the Romans to put freeborn women to the torture; yet Portia, before she would ask to know her husband's mind, would test her power of enduring pain. Let Plutarch present the picture in his own fashion:

"Now Brutus, feeling that the noblest spirits of Rome, for virtue, birth, or courage, were depending upon him, and surveying with himself all the circumstances of the dangers they were to encounter, strove indeed as much as possible, when abroad, to keep his uneasiness of mind to himself, and to compose his thoughts; but at home, and especially at night, he was not the same man, but sometimes against his will his working care would make him start out of his sleep, and other times he was taken up with further reflection and consideration of his difficulties, so that his wife that lay with him could not choose but take notice that he was full of unusual trouble, and had in agitation some dangerous and perplexing question. Portia, as was said before, was the daughter of Cato, and Brutus, her cousin-german, had married her very young, though not a maid, but after the death of a former husband. This Portia, being interested in philosophy, a great lover of her husband, and full of an understanding courage, resolved not to inquire into Brutus's secrets before she had made trial of herself. She turned all her attendants out of her chamber; and taking a little knife, such as they use to cut nails with, she gave herself a deep gash in the thigh; upon which followed a great flow of blood, and, soon after, violent pains and a shivering fever, occasioned by the wound. Now when Brutus was exceedingly anxious and afflicted for her, she, in the height of her pain, spoke thus to him: 'I, Brutus, being the daughter of Cato, was given to you in marriage, not like a concubine, to partake only in the common intercourse of bed and board, but to bear a part in all your good and all your evil fortunes; and for your part, as regards your care for me, I find no reason to complain; but from me, what evidence of my love, what satisfaction can you receive, if I may not share with you in bearing your hidden griefs, or be admitted to any of

your counsels that require secrecy and trust? I know very well that women seem to be of too weak a nature to be trusted with secrets; but surely, Brutus, a virtuous birth and education, and the company of the good and honorable, are of some force in the forming of manners; and I can boast that I am the daughter of Cato and the wife of Brutus, in which two titles though before I put less confidence, yet now I have tried myself, and find I can bid defiance to pain.' Having spoken these words, she showed him her wound, and related to him the trial she had made of her constancy; at which, being astonished, he lifted up his hands to heaven, and begged the assistance of the gods in his enterprise, that he might show himself a husband worthy of such a wife as Portia."

From that time, she shared the secret of Brutus in his direful purpose; moreover, her heart and mind were oppressed with the added burden of anxiety for him.

Another woman in Rome had once waited with great impatience while her husband thrust the ruler from his throne; and though the plot meant the death of her own father, Tullia could ride to the Senate chamber to ascertain with her own eyes if everything were in satisfactory progress. But there is no comparison to be drawn between Tullia and Portia. There is nothing to indicate that the latter was in the least stirred by ambition. She simply believed in her husband to the extent that if it were he who purposed assassination, she must deem it justified. Yet she could not ask: "Is Cæsar yet gone to the Capitol?" without danger of swooning.

At the Imperator's palace, there was another woman whose mind was troubled with dire misgivings, and who feared that which Portia impatiently awaited to hear was done. Calpurnia's womanly instinct was quicker than the suspicion of Cæsar and his friends. She was not

given to superstitious fears; but now even the very air seemed portentous of coming disaster. She dreamed, and cried out in her sleep: "They murder Cæsar."

Thus has the great dramatist, in a manner which it would be folly to imitate or replace, depicted the scene:

"CALPURNIA.—What mean you, Cæsar? Think you to walk forth?
You shall not stir out of your house to-day.
CÆSAR.—Cæsar shall forth. The things that threaten'd me
Ne'er look'd but on my back; when they shall see
The face of Cæsar, they are vanish'd.
CALPURNIA.—Cæsar, I never stood on ceremonies,
Yet now they fright me. There is one within,
Besides the things that we have heard and seen,
Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.
. . .
O Cæsar! these things are beyond all use,
And I do fear them.
CÆSAR.— What can be avolded,
Whose end is purpos'd by the mighty gods?
Yet Cæsar shall go forth; for these predictions
Are to the world in general as to Cæsar.
CALPURNIA.—When beggars die, there are no comets seen;
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes."

The wife is supported in her plea by the warnings of the augurs; and Cæsar has decided to allow Mark Antony to say he is not well. But Decius, the false coward, comes, and for his private satisfaction, because Cæsar loves him, he is told that:

"Calpurnia here, my wife stays me at home:
She dream'd to-night she saw my statua,
Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,
Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans
Came smiling, and did bathe their hands in it.
And these does she apply for warnings and portents,
And evils imminent; and on her knee
Hath begg'd that I will stay at home to-day."

Decius easily puts a better interpretation upon the vision; and he changes Cæsar's mind by cunningly

suggesting how the Senate may sneer at being adjourned until "another time,

When Cæsar's wife shall meet with better dreams."

So he leaves her sadly to reflect that his "death, a necessary end,

Will come when it will come."

Of Calpurnia we learn nothing more save that her wisdom made her quick to place her husband's papers in the hands of Mark Antony, who so successfully took upon himself the task of avenging the death of his friend.

Portia fled from Italy with her husband, and it was well for her that she did so; for under the Triumvirate there was inaugurated a reign of terror which caused the people of Rome to recall the bloody proscriptions of Sylla, and in which the wife of Cæsar's murderer would hardly have been secure. Hatred, greed, and all evil passions were let loose. It became easy for heirs to hasten to the possession of legacies by having the owners' names placed on the lists of the proscribed. The toga was given to children, in order that their property, they being then considered of age, might come into their own possession; then they were condemned to death.

During this reign of terror, the citizens of Rome were cowed by the soldiery into abject silence and inactivity; but, to their honor, it is recorded that the women did not suffer so resignedly the despoiling of their goods. A heavy contribution was levied upon fourteen hundred of the richest matrons. Led by Hortensia, the daughter of the orator, these ladies went to the Forum and appeared in the presence of the Triumvirate. Hortensia spoke. "Before presenting ourselves before you," she said, "we have solicited the intervention of Fulvia; her

refusal has obliged us to come hither. You have taken away our fathers, our children, our brothers, our husbands; to deprive us of our fortune also is to reduce us to a condition which befits neither our birth, nor our habits, nor our sex; it is to extend your proscriptions to us. But have we raised soldiers against you, or sought after your offices? Do we dispute the power for which you are fighting? From the time of Hannibal, Roman women have willingly given to the treasury their jewels and ornaments; let the Gauls or the Parthians come, and there will be found in us no less patriotism. But do not ask us to contribute to this fraticidal war which is rending the Republic; neither Marius, nor Cinna, nor even Sylla during his tyranny, dared to do so." The triumvirs were inclined to drive the matrons from the Forum; but the people began to be stirred, so they yielded and set forth another edict, reducing to four hundred the number of women who were to be taxed.

Much of this cruelty was instigated by a woman whom Hortensia mentions. Antony, whose amatory experiences were as varied as they were numerous, was at one time engaged in an intrigue with Fulvia, then the wife of Clodius. She afterward became Antony's wife. Here was a woman the exact opposite of Portia; a resentful, stubborn, masculine woman, "in whom," says Velleius Paterculus, "there was nothing feminine but her body." It is told of her that when Cicero was murdered, his head was brought to her, and she drove her bodkin through the tongue which had so bitterly rated her and her husband. On another occasion, the head of one of the proscribed was brought to Antony. "I do not know it," he said; "let it be taken to my wife." It was the head of a citizen of whom nothing worse is known than that he had refused to sell a farm which Fulvia desired to obtain.

Plutarch relates that Antony was obliged to resort to all sorts of boyish tricks in order to keep Fulvia in good humor. Among other like stories which he says were current, he gives the following, relating to the triumvir's sudden return to Rome: "Disguising himself, he came to her by night, muffled up as a servant that brought letters from Antony. She, with great impatience, before she receives the letter, asks if Antony were well, and instead of an answer he gives her the letter; and, as she was opening it, he takes her about the neck and kisses her." The historian gives this characterization of Fulvia: "a woman not born for spinning or housewifery, nor one that could be content with ruling a private husband, but prepared to govern a first magistrate, or give orders to a commander-in-chief. So that Cleopatra was under great obligations to her for having taught Antony to be so good a servant, he coming to her hands tame and broken into entire obedience to the commands of a mistress." Evidently, we must regard Mark Antony as being the great historical type of the "henpecked" husband; there is, however, no occasion for sympathy; his punishment was no greater than he deserved. The chief misfortune lay in the fact that Fulvia died, and thus made room for the noble and much-abused Octavia, whom he afterward married.

Let us return to Portia. There is a beautiful incident related of her final parting from Brutus in the island of Nisida. She was overcome with grief, but refrained from showing it for fear that it might shake her husband's fortitude. But in passing through a hall, a picture which she there saw accidentally betrayed her. It was a representation of Hector parting from Andromache when he went to engage the Greeks. He was in the act of giving his little son Astyanax into her arms, while she fixes her tearful eyes for the last time upon her husband. Portia

could not look upon this piece, so suggestive of her own circumstances, without weeping; and every day, as long as she remained in the place, she went to gaze upon it. It was on one of those occasions that Acilius, a friend of Brutus, repeated from Homer the lines where Andromache speaks to Hector:

> "'But, Hector, you
> To me are father and are mother too,
> My brother, and my loving husband true.'"

Brutus, sadly smiling, replied, "But I must not answer Portia, as Hector did Andromache:

> "'Mind you your loom, and to your maids give law.'

For though the natural weakness of her body hinders her from doing what only the strength of men can perform, yet she has a mind as valiant and as active for the good of her country as the best of us."

As to the time and manner of Portia's death, the ancient writers are not fully agreed. But the best authenticated account is that which is thus represented by Shakespeare:

> "BRUTUS.—O Cassius! I am sick of many griefs.
> CASSIUS.—Of your philosophy you make no use,
> If you give place to accidental evils.
> BRUTUS.—No man bears sorrow better; Portia is dead.
> CASSIUS.—Ha!—Portia?
> BRUTUS.—She is dead.
> CASSIUS.—How 'scap'd I killing, when I cross'd you so?
> O insupportable and touching loss!—
> Upon what sickness?
> BRUTUS.— Impatient of my absence,
> And grief that young Octavius with Mark Antony
> Had made themselves so strong;—for with her death
> These tidings came.—With this she fell distract,
> And, her attendants absent, swallow'd fire."

In Portia and Brutus we see that close and mutual sympathy, than which marriage in any period of the world's

history has nothing better to show. The ancient historians took great delight in eulogizing her character and praising her qualities. They are a unit in the belief that, in all points, she was worthy to be the consort of him whom Antony justly honored as "The noblest Roman of them all."

Chapter VII

The Roman Woman in Politics

VII

THE ROMAN WOMAN IN POLITICS

IN the disordered conditions which followed the death of Cæsar, the old Roman constitution lost what little force it had seemed to retain under the preceding dictators. The offices of the State remained the same in name, and were still supposed to be filled by men who were freely chosen by the people; but all were under the hand of a power which the Senate dared not resist, and in which the people, weary of the bloody contentions of the oligarchy, were willing to acquiesce so long as bread and games were forthcoming. This power was the army. Whosoever controlled the army found the interpretation of his own political rights not difficult. The forces of the Empire were in the hands of three men: Lepidus, who commanded the legions which at the opportune moment were near Rome; Antony, who was the idol of the people; and the young Octavius, who stood on the vantage of his relationship to the great Cæsar. These men divided the world among themselves; but, in the end, Octavius, by the steadiness of his mind, the fixity of his purpose, and the scope of his executive ability, won for himself the Empire. During the years of civil war and political turmoil which accompanied these changes, much in the Roman social construction which had hitherto been beneath found

its way to the surface. It was a struggle in which any strength, skill, or art that enabled its possessor to best his fellows meant political advantage. Though deficient in strength, women, having a certain skill peculiar to their sex and being especially adapted to the practice of those arts by means of which political situations are managed from behind the scenes, became much more influential in State affairs than formerly. Their prominence grew as the government narrowed down from the free Senate to the person of the emperor. Women have always been powerful in a monarchical or an imperial court, but have never enjoyed any notable political rights in a republic.

The period which we are now studying is rich in the names of women who, standing around Cæsar's throne, often found means to further or thwart the designs of its occupant. Among them we may select Livia, not for the dignity of her character or the ability of her mind,—though she was not lacking in either of these qualities,—but because of her position as the Augusta and her long life, she, better than any other, serves to represent the women who were influential in Roman public affairs. Though if Fulvia had lived and Antony had been discreet, Rome might have been governed by a woman, and Fulvia instead of Livia would have been the type we should have chosen. While her husband was following Cleopatra to Egypt, a prisoner to her fascinations, Fulvia had control of the consuls and was making war against Octavius. If this ambitious, strong-minded woman, who held reviews of the troops with a sword at her side, had been possessed of sufficient funds, Octavius might never have won the purple; but the only means by which the army could be held were wasted by her husband in monstrous extravagances. Defeated in her schemes through the

non-coöperation of her husband, Fulvia became ill through vexation and shame, and died about B. C. 39.

Livia possessed an entirely different character from that which dominated Fulvia; yet, being of the Claudian race,—that family which, as Niebuhr says, "in all ages distinguished itself alike by a spirit of haughty defiance, by disdain for the laws, and iron hardness of heart,"—it would have been strange if Livia had not made her influence felt in the house of Cæsar and to the sorrow of those who stood in her way. When Livia first met Octavius, she was eighteen years old and the wife of Tiberius Claudius Nero, a man probably much older than herself. The varying aspects of the Civil War made it difficult for a man who sought before all things his own security to know which cause to support. Ill luck seemed to prompt Claudius Nero in his choice; first he threw in his lot with Brutus and Cassius, though he was indebted to Cæsar for many favors; then, after the defeat of these, he joined Antony against Augustus. The consequence was that he spent much time in the endeavor to rectify his mistakes of policy by fleeing from one commander to another. In all these journeyings and adventures his wife accompanied him, carrying with her their young child Tiberius, who was destined to become Emperor of Rome. At times she was exposed to great danger; for instance, in Lacedæmon, during an escape by night from their enemies, the forest through which they were passing was on fire, and her hair and clothing were scorched by the flames. Claudius Nero succeeded in gaining a pardon from Octavius, and he and his wife returned to Rome. Whether this grace resulted from the representations he made in his own defence, or from the interest excited by Livia in the mind of Octavius, history does not inform us; but certain conclusions are unavoidable, inasmuch as Octavius

compelled Claudius Nero to divorce his wife so that he himself might marry her.

In order that this marriage might take place, a double divorce was necessary; for Octavius was already united to Scribonia, by whom he had a daughter, Julia, the only child that was ever born to him. He had married Scribonia for purposes of political expediency. At the time of his marriage he was only twenty-three years old, while his bride was his senior by many years and had already lost two husbands by death. The object of this marriage was to win for Octavius the support of Libo, the brother of Scribonia, and through him his son-in-law Sextus Pompeius, who was a man of great influence. This purpose being served, the young ruler found himself at the same time secure in his position and tired of the marital alliance which he had formed for the sake of that security. He alleged perversity of character and incompatibility of temperament—the only charges he could prefer—in Scribonia, and sent her a letter of separation only a few days after his child had been born.

"By this act," says Adolf Stahr, as quoted by S. Baring Gould, "Octavius himself strewed the seeds of discord which were to disturb fatally the concord of the imperial family, not only during his own life, but far beyond it. Scribonia would have been no woman not to have felt deadly hatred toward that woman in whom she saw the robber of her honor, the wrecker of her happiness, the overthrower of her ambition, and by means of whom a new family forced its way into that place which should have been hers and usurped her claims and her hopes. As the mother of Julia, the only daughter of the sovereign, as the ancestress of Julia's children and grandchildren, she remained, in spite of the separation, the head of the Julian race, the dynasty called to sovereignty. No wonder,

then, that henceforth she stood in hostile opposition to the Claudian Livia and her two children. This deadly animosity between the two family branches of the imperial house was reflected more than two generations later in the memoirs of the great-grandchild of Scribonia, the second Agrippina, wife of the Emperor Claudius, and mother of Nero, the source whence, poisoned as it was with fiercest hate toward Livia and her son, the Emperor Tiberius, Tacitus drew the colors with which he painted both one and the other in his *Annals*."

There is good ground for believing that the marriage of Octavius and Livia was a love match. Though the new bride was descended from one of the most aristocratic and powerful families of Rome, her relatives were not especially prominent at that time; so it would seem that the triumvir's regard for her was not regulated by the calculations of expediency. Livia possessed not only beauty, but also the character of mind which was likely to charm a man with the disposition of Octavius. She was quick to understand and appreciate his intelligent purposes and far-reaching achievements. There was between the two that sympathy which is the absolute requisite of a happy marriage.

As to Livia's personal attractions, Ovid assures us that she had the features of Venus and the manners of Juno. Making not a little allowance for the flattery made necessary by the position of the courtier, and some for the license of the poet, we may still believe that the wife of the first emperor was a very beautiful woman. There are yet in existence a great many representations of her. She was the first Roman woman to have her face displayed upon the coin of the realm; but we cannot accept these images as portraits, though they bear her name. There is one Roman medal, however, which represents

Livia in old age; consequently, we may safely consider it as authentic. No picture of the youthful loveliness which captivated Octavius has been preserved; but there is in the Louvre a magnificent statue which represents Livia as the goddess Ceres. There is much character in the face, and there is a sufficient resemblance to Tiberius to authorize the belief that it really portrays his mother. The form and features are those of a matron on the declining side of thirty. The figure is majestic, possibly made more so than the original for reasons complimentary to the divinity; yet it seems to justify Ovid's account of the Juno-like manners of the Augusta. The charm of youthful beauty has not yet deserted the face. The eyes, so far as can be judged from the cold, colorless marble, were lustrous and large; the mouth, with its short upper lip, was capable of both power and variety of expression, and doubtless aided Livia to obtain her will of Augustus as much by its silent eloquence as by its articulate enunciation. To the slight arch of the Roman nose she of course could claim a national right.

Three months after her marriage to Octavius, Livia gave birth to her second son. On this occasion, Cæsar wrote in his journal: "To-day my wife bore me a boy, whom I caused to be sent to his father Nero." But Nero dying soon afterward, and having in his will left this child—who was named Drusus—and also the latter's brother Tiberius to the guardianship of Octavius, the children were again restored to Livia and trained as the sons of her imperial husband.

Livia's marriage with Octavius, whatever may be said of the circumstances under which it was brought about, was a happy one. For fifty-two years they lived together, a period ending only with Octavius's death; and upon her character as a wife there was never cast, even by those

whose hatred she excited, the slightest reflection. In the midst of a corrupt and luxurious society, she lived in accordance with those chaste and simple principles which governed the matrons of the early Republic. It is said that her husband commonly wore clothing which was wrought by the hands of his wife and the other female members of his family. While, however, the house of Octavius was conducted after the old-fashioned method, Livia was by no means such a political nonentity as had been the matron of ancient times. She was obedient to her husband, and in all things subservient to his wishes, even going so far—if Suetonius is to be credited in the matter—as to more than condone his wandering inclinations of an amorous nature. Livia knew how to manage the first man who was able to capture and hold the government of the Roman Empire. Her tact and good sense, conjoined with his affection, enabled her to wield an influence over the emperor which had its effect in the weightiest affairs of State. Her counsel was usually in the interest of kindness and forbearance; more than once, when he was inclined to exercise severity in the punishment of his enemies, she won him to gentler methods. That he frequently sought her advice in important political matters, we know; and it is on record that sometimes, when he wished to consult her on subjects of grave moment, he would first write out that which he desired to say, in order that he might present his ideas as clearly and correctly as possible.

The picture given us of Livia by the ancient historians is of a double and somewhat inconsistent character. The wife of Augustus was a model of uprightness and honor; the empress shown us by Tacitus as seeking to bring to pass her own designs in regard to the succession was heartless and unprincipled. Here are the conclusions drawn by Merivale, and they form a verdict in which

probably most students of Roman history will agree: "In her second home, she directed all her arts to securing her position, and became, perhaps, in no long course of time, as consummate a dissembler and intriguer as Octavius himself. While, indeed, she seconded him in his efforts to cajole the Roman people, she was engaged, not less successfully, in cajoling him. Her elegant manners, in which she was reputed to exceed the narrow limits allowed by fashion and opinion to the Roman matrons, proved no less fascinating to him than her beauty. Her intellect was undoubtedly of a high order; and when her personal charms failed to enchain his roving inclinations, she was content with the influence she still continued to hold over his understanding. The sway she acquired over him in the first transports of courtship she retained without change or interruption to the day of his death."

Before we turn our attention to the history of Livia's efforts to secure the succession for her son Tiberius, let us fill out the picture in which she stands by placing in it some of the noted women by whom she was surrounded. First and foremost, there is Octavia, the half-sister of Cæsar Augustus. For this noble woman the ancient writers have nothing but the most enthusiastic praise. Plutarch briefly describes her as a "wonder of a woman." Fortunately, we know more of her than is expressed in that superlative phrase. Her mother's name was Atia, and she was a few years older than Octavius. The historian above quoted claims for her so much beauty that she did not suffer in that respect in comparison with her great Egyptian rival, Cleopatra; but the figures of her which are extant hardly support the claim. Nor was she clever like Cleopatra; indeed, she had little to recommend her except her relationship with the powerful Octavius, her sterling goodness, and the sweet amiability of her

character. For this reason her marriage to Antony was as great a failure in the purpose for which it was intended —the winning of the triumvir from his infatuation—as it was a misfortune to herself. That a woman like Octavia should be united to such a man as Mark Antony did not seem to the ancients such a tragedy as it appears to us; and probably the sister of Octavius endured with an unconcern incomprehensible to us the knowledge that her husband had been the lover of many women, some even of the most abandoned sort.

For a while, Octavia did exercise a restraining influence over her wayward husband; and though she could not gird on a sword and harangue the legions, as did Fulvia, more than once by her prudence and good sense she helped Antony materially in his time of need. It also seems that while his wife was by his side he was able to withstand any propensity that was in him to go down into Egypt. Plutarch recounts that Antony having a misunderstanding with Octavius, the two were about to oppose their forces in civil strife at Tarentum. Octavia, however, obtained leave of her husband to visit the camp of her brother; "and as she was on her way she met Cæsar, with his two friends Agrippa and Mæcenas, and, taking these two aside, with urgent entreaties and much lamentation she told them that from being the most fortunate woman upon earth she was in danger of becoming the most unhappy; for as yet everyone's eyes were fixed upon her as the wife and sister of the two great commanders, but, if rash counsels should prevail, and war ensue, 'I shall be miserable,' said she, 'without redress; for on what side soever victory falls, I shall be sure to be a loser.'" Cæsar was overcome by these entreaties, and advanced in a peaceable temper to Tarentum, where he was entertained by Antony. "And when at length an agreement

was made between them . . . Octavia further obtained of her husband twenty light ships for her brother, and of her brother a thousand foot for her husband. So, having parted good friends, Cæsar went immediately to make war with Pompey to conquer Sicily," and Antony repaired to Syria, where he once more met the Egyptian queen; and from this infatuation Octavia was never again able to win him.

Yet this admirable woman did not cease to fulfil her part as a dutiful and helpful wife. When her husband returned from his disastrous expedition against the Parthians, having lost a great part of his forces and all his supplies, he received a message from Octavia asking where she might meet him. The answer received by her was a peremptory and unfeeling command not to proceed further than Athens, as he was about to start on a new expedition. Displeased though she was, being fully aware of the cause wherefore she was not welcome, she wrote again, asking to know to what place she should send the soldiers, money, and presents she had brought for his use.

On her return to Rome, Cæsar, incensed at the treatment his sister had received, commanded her to leave Antony's house and repudiate all further connection with him. This she steadfastly refused to do. She continued to live in her husband's house until she was obliged to leave by his own command. Then she took with her own children those of Fulvia; and after the death of Antony, she even welcomed to her home the daughter which had been born to him by her Egyptian rival, and it was impossible for the Romans to perceive that she gave less motherly care to the young Cleopatra than she bestowed upon her own offspring.

Judging by what we know of her, no age has produced a more beautiful character than that of Octavia. In her

were exemplified the fairest of those qualities which are especially inculcated by the principles of Christianity. Goodness, long-suffering, forbearance, and gentleness: these were exhibited in her life to a degree which after ages refused to believe possible under paganism; which goes to show that the idea that the noblest graces of character could not ripen previous to the present era is an unwarranted assumption. It arises from the fact that in the accounts we have of the ancient world there is more said of the exercise and the consequences of violent passions and human depravity than there is of pure love and kindly forbearance; but this may be accounted for by the well-attested axiom that peaceful lives furnish no history. If Octavia, living in the very centre of all the varied influences which fomented around the Palatine Hill, could maintain a pure and noble character, we may be very sure that the women who followed her example in the humbler walks of life were not so few as the Pagan satirists and the Christian apologists combine in leading us to suppose.

There is no record of Octavia's having taken part in any of those activities by which Livia and other feminine members of the Cæsarian household endeavored to affect the course of political events. When all hope of there being any male issue of Augustus to inherit his rule was abandoned, the chance that Octavia's son by her first husband would be the next emperor seemed to become a certainty. Of her bereavement in his death we will speak later on. As the women with which this chapter deals were all of one family, and consequently were at home under the same roof, and, moreover, as the art of building had at this time attained its perfection at Rome, it will enable us to form a better picture of the life of these women if we see them in the house, their peculiar sphere.

About the time that Augustus married Livia, he built for himself a new residence. The Domus Augustana was erected on the Palatine Hill, and from the fact that this site was adopted for the imperial abode the magnificent structures reared upon it were called palaces; thus a word of differentiation was provided for the dwelling houses of the rulers. Livia's palace was not a large building, judging from what was considered necessary at a time when rich families were served by hundreds of slaves; but Livia was married to a man who was quite willing to have others of a lower rank outstrip him in extravagant living, so long as he had the power to decide whether or not it were best for the interests of the State that they be allowed to live at all; and as the Augusta had some influence in these decisions, she may have been able contentedly to visit the wife of Mæcenas, who lived in a house of far greater magnificence than her own. As the better class of Roman abodes were all constructed after the same general plan, it is not difficult, in imagination, out of the materials of information which we possess, to reërect upon its ruins, which still exist, the Domus Augustana.

The portico which adorned the outside extended the whole length of the front of the house, and possibly around the sides. It was a colonnade of native travertine—some of the later occupants of the imperial throne were hardly satisfied with the costliest marble. The vestibule was a large apartment, which was always freely open to clients and callers. The *Salve* inscribed or worked in mosaic upon the threshold of the outer door expressed the generous hospitality which characterized all Roman dwellings of that time. From the vestibule another door led to the *atrium,* the most important room in the house. It was large, and decorated with all the splendor which the wealth of the owner could warrant, and with such beauty

as his taste might dictate. It was roofed, with the exception of an opening in the centre, called the *compluvium,* through which was admitted the rain water into a cistern in the floor. In the early times the *atrium* was the common room of the family, and in it were carried on the domestic occupations presided over by the mistress of the house, but in the days of Livia it was the audience chamber of the owner. The walls of this apartment were highly decorated with landscape paintings, or else lined with beautiful marbles. Some of the paintings which covered the walls of the Domus Augustana have been preserved, and in the great spaces through which they were seen their brilliant colors must have been very effective.

Opening from the *atrium* was the *tablinum;* here were the family archives, the statues, pictures, and other ancestral relics. Around these great apartments were smaller chambers, which were commonly used for the lodging of guests, though it is probable that Livia's establishment included a house set apart for this purpose. Behind the apartments we have described, and reached through *fauces,* or narrow passages, was the real interior and private portion of the palace. First there came the peristyle. This was a large, oblong court, open to the sky in the middle and surrounded by a colonnade of polished marble pillars. The centre of this court was filled with shrubs and flowers, grown in great boxes of earth; and the beauty and comfort of this charming "drawing room" were enhanced by the cool fountains of water with which Rome was so bountifully supplied. Here was Livia's forum. Here was the fitting stage where she displayed those gifts of mind and graces of person which never lost their potent influence with her husband and gave her title of Augusta a real political significance.

Opening from the peristyle was the *triclinium,* or dining hall. It was here that the extravagance of the Romans was especially exhibited. In *La Palais de Scaurus,* by Mazois, there is a pen picture of a *triclinium,* every detail of which is authenticated by ancient authorities. It reveals a luxury and a disregard of expense to which our day furnishes no parallel. But the banquet hall of the Augustan house was not equipped in so costly a fashion; there was still cherished some remembrance of the ancient Sabine simplicity.

In addition to the apartments mentioned, there were spacious halls and salons used for such purpose as that of a picture gallery or a library. The bed chambers were usually placed between the outer walls of the house and the more important rooms; the only remarkable features about them were their smallness and inconvenience. There was an upper story, which was used principally for sleeping apartments, and probably there were no windows opening to the street except on this second floor. The rear part of the house was given up to the kitchen, the bakery, and the mill for grinding flour. Above all, in a literal and also commendatory sense of the word, was the *solarium.* This was a delightful retreat on the roof, furnished with plants, flowers, and fountains.

It was to such an abode as this that Livia came, and there brought her influence to bear on one of the most brilliant epochs of the world's history. After her repudiation by Antony, Octavia and her children also came to reside at the Domus Augustana; and there lived also the little Julia, the daughter of Scribonia and Octavius.

How early in her career Livia commenced laying her plans for the succession of her son to the imperial rule, we do not know; nor is there any certainty as to the extent of her culpability in carrying them out. It is most likely

that her hope that she might bear a son to Augustus who would have an indisputable claim to the heritage allowed her at first to view with complacency the already existing putative but more removed successors. Time wore on, and her expectations failed of realization. Her sons, Tiberius and Drusus, were growing up, and both were manifesting those qualities which showed them worthy of taking the reins of government. The habit of exercising an influence in the affairs of State, through the confidence placed in her by her husband, made the prospect of having to relinquish that power, in the event of the death of Augustus, constantly more intolerable; but the woman who was called "a female Ulysses" was likely to win her way.

Julia, though the only child born in the purple, might not inherit the imperial sceptre, being a woman. But Octavia had a son of her first marriage, named Marcellus, of whom Augustus was especially fond. While he was but a youth of seventeen, Julia, then fourteen years old, was given to him in marriage; and thus it was hoped the succession would be continued by means of the union of the daughter and the nephew of the emperor. These anticipations were doomed to disappointment, as Marcellus died shortly after the marriage. One historian, Dion Cassius, informs us that it was whispered about that Livia was responsible for the death of Julia's husband, being jealous because Cæsar heaped upon him favors which were denied to her own sons; but, while relating this, the historian claims that it was a groundless accusation. However, we have it on the authority of so trustworthy a witness as Seneca that Octavia, in this sad bereavement, for once was unworthy of herself. He says that "she turned to hate all mothers, and the angry passion of her sorrow was directed principally against Livia, because that now the hope and prospects that had belonged to her own son

were transferred to the son of Livia." Such unreasoning grief in this otherwise noble woman was a mark of common human frailty; but it does not present so pleasing a picture as that memorable scene in which Virgil, at the command of Augustus, read before Octavia the sixth book of his Æneid, in which he has commemorated Marcellus. Grief-stricken and dejected as she was, Octavia probably gave but little attention to the opening lines; but her interest was aroused as the poet proceeded to describe Æneas's visit to the under world, where dwelt those who had been dearest to her, and whither she knew herself to be rapidly tending. When she heard the lines—

> "This youth, the blissful vision of a day,
> Shall just be shown on earth, then snatched away,"

she was startled by the description of her own son, and, hiding her face, she burst into tears; and when the poet uttered the words *"Tu Marcellus eris,"* which he had wisely withheld to the end of the passage, she could endure no more and swooned because of the intensity of her sorrowful emotion. The information that she ordered Virgil to be presented with ten thousand sesterces for every line of the passage relating to her son is interesting, but does not add particularly to the beauty of the scene. Shortly after this, occurred her death. Augustus caused certain public buildings which he was at this time erecting to be dedicated in honor of his sister.

Now that Julia was married, she was freed to some extent from that severe discipline in which Augustus deemed it necessary to bring up the girls of his family. Her training had been very strict. She had even been obliged, at a time when other girls of far inferior birth were perfecting themselves in more fashionable accomplishments, to assist her aunt and her stepmother in

spinning wool for her father's clothes. She was denied any freedom of intercourse with the youths of her own age. Augustus once wrote to a young nobleman: "You have not behaved with proper respect in paying a visit to my daughter at Baiæ." But natural inclination, always stronger than discipline in determining the direction of a moral career, led Julia into evil courses. For many years, however, her father saw nothing less innocent in her conduct than that wit and gayety of spirit which he easily condoned. She well knew how to turn the edge of the mild rebukes of a fond parent. On one occasion, seeing her surrounded at a public exhibition by a number of the young fashionables of the city, and noticing that she did not maintain that dignity of deportment which he thought becoming in the daughter of an emperor, Augustus wrote her a letter expressing his displeasure and holding up before her the example of Livia, who encouraged in her company none but "grave and reverend signiors." Julia had a ready reply; this was the note scribbled on a tablet and sent back to her father: "These young men will also have become old fogies by the time I am an old woman." One day, later in her life, her father found a slave engaged in plucking the gray hairs from his daughter's head. This operation suddenly ceased on his entrance, and he feigned not to have noticed it. Then he asked abruptly: "Julia, which would you rather be—gray or bald?" "Why, father, gray, of course." "You little liar," replied Augustus, "see here," and he held up some of the gray hairs which had fallen on her dressing gown.

Shortly after the death of Marcellus, Julia was again married, this time to the great warrior Agrippa, the staunch friend of her father. This also was distinctly a political marriage. Julia was eighteen, Agrippa was forty-two,

while at the time of betrothal he was already wedded to Marcella, the daughter of Octavia. The usual divorce severed these bonds, and Marcella was given to Antonius, the son of the triumvir. Both Octavia and Scribonia were desirous of this matrimonial readjustment. They probably saw that Julia needed a firm disciplinarian like Agrippa to keep the questionable proclivities of her character from attaining too exuberant a freedom. It is also likely that they hoped that this union would result in heirs who would frustrate the expectations of Livia and her sons. But to their check thus played, Livia, in due time, answered with a decisive mate. To Julia and Agrippa there were born three sons and one daughter, named respectively Lucius, Caius, Agrippa Posthumus, and Julia. Thus Tacitus relates the dénouement: "Augustus had adopted Lucius and Caius into the Cæsarian family; and although they had not yet laid aside the puerile garment, his ambition was strong to see them declared princes of the Roman youth, and even mentioned for the consulship; at the same time, he affected to decline these honors for them. Upon the death of Agrippa, they were cut off, either by a decease premature but natural, or by the arts of their stepmother Livia: Lucius on his journey to the armies in Spain, Caius on his return from Armenia, ill of a wound. And as Drusus had been long since dead, Tiberius Nero was the only surviving stepson. On him every honor was accumulated, he was adopted by Augustus as his son and a colleague in the Empire, . . . and this was brought about, not by the secret machinations of his mother, as heretofore, but at her open suit. For over Augustus, now aged, she had obtained such absolute sway that he had banished his only surviving grandson, Agrippa Posthumus, a person of clownish brutality, with great bodily strength, but convicted of no heinous offence."

Julia had by this time worked out her own condemnation. Those stories of her flagrant misconduct which for years had been part of the common gossip of the baths and porticoes of the city at last reached the ears of her father. He tried not to believe them. Gazing fondly upon his only child, he said: "Just like her I am sure that Claudia must have looked, of whom our forefathers told that she was slandered. But she proved her innocence." Those to whom he said this listened respectfully; but behind his back they sneered. After Agrippa's death, Julia had made another political marriage. Tiberius had been compelled to put away his wife, Vipsania, the daughter of Agrippa, whom he dearly loved,—she was probably the only human being for whom this morose man ever had any real affection,—and was forced, much against his will, to replace her by Agrippa's widow. Tiberius knew Julia as her father did not; and, rather than live with her, he betook himself to a voluntary exile in Rhodes. By thus doing, he seemed to frustrate all his mother's plans for his advancement; but she, with deadly persistency, determined that there should be in Cæsar's family no other candidate for the imperial position, which must soon be vacated. There is some hint of Julia's misdoings coming to light through the discovery of a plot, in which Livia had no part, to shorten the emperor's days; but there is no proof, nor does it seem probable, that Julia was a conspirator against her father's life. She was probably the tool of others. Augustus, however, was constrained to institute an investigation, which revealed to him all the turpitude of his daughter's conduct; she was banished to an island in the Bay of Naples, and there strictly guarded until the day of her death.

The case of Julia gives no occasion for pity, except for the gray-haired old man who had lost by death all those upon

whom he had rested his ambitious hopes for the future of his house. None were left save Livia,—probably Augustus himself never for a moment entertained a suspicion that his wife was the cause of his misfortunes,—Tiberius, whom he never loved, and this woman, whom he wished had died in her infancy. And yet the edge is taken from any sympathy one might have for Augustus, when it is remembered that, notwithstanding his stern demand for chastity on the part of the women of his own family and all of noble birth, his own conduct, if Suetonius reports truthfully, was no better than that of his daughter. But to condemn licentiousness in their women and to practise it themselves did not seem to the men of Rome to be either illogical or inconsistent.

Julia represented the prevalent social conditions of her time. Licentiousness, like a cancer, was eating into the heart of Roman society; and this was to grow still worse. It must be admitted also that female degeneracy kept pace with the increase of woman's influence in the political world. Livia and Agrippina the Elder were exceptions; but the rule was, and has been in all history, that the activity of women in State affairs was accompanied by an abundance of meretricious amatory intrigues. It is a remarkable fact that in the history of the Roman woman—and possibly this statement might be given a much wider application—there is no instance where any individual woman designedly helped to bring about the enactment of a law for the public weal. Female politics always had for their object the advancement of the female politician's own personal interests or those of some male favorite. And women could never have favorites outside their own families with safety to their honor. Whenever women have sought high favors either from men or for men, their personal charms have ever been their principal argument and illicit love their chief inducement.

One of the most radical of the early changes made in the Roman constitution was brought about by the piqued vanity of a woman. Fabius Ambustus, a man of power and renown in the ancient Republic, had two daughters. One of them was married to a patrician named Sulpicius, while the other was espoused to Stolo, a plebeian tribune. This office was the highest to which at the time a man of plebeian birth could lawfully aspire. One day the wife of Stolo, being at her sister's house, was startled by the sound of the lictor's staff at the door—a mode of announcement to which plebeian ears were unaccustomed. Being laughed at by Sulpicia, she went to her own home in high dudgeon, and henceforth neither Fabius Ambustus nor Stolo could gain any relief from her complaints until they had brought it to pass that the Senate consented to the conferring of magisterial office upon plebeians, with the consequence that her husband also might be attended by a lictor with his axe and rods. The story is important because it illustrates the greater portion of the Roman woman's interest in politics.

Livia was now the sole woman of influence in the imperial palace. Scribonia had voluntarily accompanied her daughter into exile; and the daughter of Julia, who had inherited both her mother's name and her failings, was banished from the city. It was not difficult now for Livia to secure the adoption of Tiberius by Augustus as his son and also as his heir. This, however, was not done without causing some misgivings in the minds of the Romans, who, as Tacitus says, feared to be under bondage to a woman "with the ungovernable spirit peculiar to her sex."

On the nineteenth of August, A. D. 14, Livia and the intimate friends of Augustus were gathered around the emperor's deathbed. "Tell me," said the great emperor, "have I played well my part?" Posterity has never

questioned the nature or the truth of their answer. Then he said: "Let all applaud and clap their hands." His last words, which throw more light on the character of this great woman than all the good and bad that is said of her, were: "Livia! live mindful of our union; and now, farewell."

The Augusta had sent urgent messengers to recall her son; and she caused the people to be kept in ignorance of the true condition of her husband until the news of his death and of the succession of Tiberius could be announced at the same time. But, although she had labored so persistently, and, if the historians are correct, so unscrupulously, for the accession of her son, with the death of Augustus, Livia's power also came to an end. Tiberius was impatient of any female interference, even that of his mother. She was made priestess of the deified Augustus; but Tiberius declared that public honors should be adjudged to women with extreme moderation, and he refused to allow a lictor to be appointed for her service. Still, after a fashion of his own, he treated her with the greatest respect until the day of her death; and he always allowed her politic counsels to have considerable weight in his decisions, well aware that no one else would so jealously guard his interests.

There is one incident which redounds to the credit of Tiberius, whose sadly damaged reputation needs everything that can be said in his favor, and which is worth noticing because it not only illustrates his manner of dealing with the imperious Augusta, but also indicates the kind of purposes for which the political power of influential women was exercised. Livia, presuming on her position, demanded that Piso should be punished for insulting her by suing Urgulania, one of her favorites, for the payment of money which was clearly due to him. Tiberius refused

so unjust a request, but gave his mother to understand that no less a person than himself would plead her cause before the judges. He fulfilled his word by loitering so long on his way to the court that by the time he reached it the judges had awarded the claimant his right, so that the empress found no way open by which she could save her friend except by paying the money herself.

Livia's old age was embittered to herself, and still more discredited with many of her contemporaries, by a new phase of the old feud which had for so long rent the imperial family. Agrippina, the daughter of Julia and Agrippa, had been married to Germanicus, the son of Antonia and the elder Drusus. In the wedded life of these two was exemplified an excellence of conjugal union that was almost perfect. Germanicus was a brave and able soldier and a man whose moral character was far superior to the standard of his time. Agrippina was a woman whose purity of life was worthy of the principles which guided the matrons of the ancient Republic, but whose disposition would not permit her to relinquish any privilege which was open to the women of the new times and warranted by her position.

Livia's grudge against Agrippina seems to have been a continuation of the old discord between the Claudian and the Julian branches of the governing house. Each of these women had her adherents, who by their machinations and recriminations made peace an utter stranger in the imperial palace. Livia, however, possessed a threefold advantage over Agrippina: the latter was precluded by her nature from adopting against an enemy any nefarious design—a scruple of which history has been able to discover no trace in the conduct of the former lady; the Augusta was strongly supported in her dislike by the Emperor Tiberius; and Agrippina was away from Rome a great part of the time.

She elected to accompany her husband, even on his most dangerous expeditions. On one occasion, when their lives were threatened by the mutinous legions and he urged her to depart to safer quarters, she proudly answered that, being the granddaughter of the deified Augustus, she was not so degenerate as to shrink from danger.

To what extent this animosity between the two ladies was carried it is difficult to determine. Some historians claim that it resulted in placing another awful crime to Livia's account. Germanicus died in Seleucia in the thirty-fourth year of his age, of some mysterious malady; and there were many who at once whispered that Livia had been the means of bringing about his death by poisoning. But there is no proof of this, and a careful study of the known facts causes it to seem improbable. There was no motive for such an act, beyond the fact that the husband of Agrippina was exceedingly popular with the army and the people; but this was offset by his undoubted and enthusiastic devotion to Tiberius. The facts, so far as they are now ascertainable, are these: Piso, who was Proconsul of Syria, was instigated by his wife Plancina to acts of disrespect and animosity against Germanicus and Agrippina. This woman, who was of an exceedingly masculine temperament,—as is shown among other things by her habit of taking part in the exercises of the cavalry,—was a great favorite with Livia and shared her closest confidence. Plancina is said to have kept about her a woman named Martina, who had an evil reputation as being expert in the use of poisonous drugs, but of whose existence nothing more is known than the little that is told in this connection. Germanicus, on his deathbed, declared that he was cut short in his career by the dark devices of a woman. The news of his decease did not affect Livia with the same degree of sorrow as it did the populace;

which fact tended to strengthen suspicion in the minds of the latter. But all this proves nothing, even though Piso, despairing of acquittal, destroyed himself during his trial, after having written a letter protesting his innocence. Nor does the fact that Plancina was protected by Livia furnish any proof that the aged and much-maligned empress was guilty of instigating the crime, if crime it was.

Agrippina, after the body of her husband had been burned on the funeral pyre, set forth in the depth of winter on her journey to Rome with his ashes. At every port where the fleet touched she received a sad but an imposing ovation. All the friends of her husband crowded to Brundusium, where she was to disembark; but they could not agree as to whether she should be received in respectful silence or with some more demonstrative expression of their sympathy. Tacitus thus depicts the affecting scene: "Nothing was settled when the fleet came sweeping slowly in, not rigged out in sprightly fashion, but wearing the ensigns of sadness. When, however, the widow descended from the ship, bearing the funeral urn in her hand, accompanied by her two infants and with her eyes steadily fixed on the ground, one simultaneous groan burst from the entire assemblage." Neither Tiberius, nor Livia, nor Antonia, the mother of Germanicus, attended the funeral. Tacitus gives the reasons that were alleged, but does not decide which was nearest the truth. "Tiberius and Livia either thought public lamentation beneath their dignity, or else they feared lest if folk peered into their faces their hypocrisy would be discovered. Whether sickness detained Antonia, or overmuch sorrow and inability to go through the ceremony, is not known. I would rather believe that she was held back by Tiberius and Livia, who did not leave the palace, that they might seem to mourn in private."

Agrippina had been exhorted by her dying husband, "as she would cherish his memory, and for the sake of their children, to divest herself of her unyielding spirit, and humble herself to Fortune in the storm of her displeasure; and, on her return to the city, not to irritate, in a competition for the mastery, those who were more than a match for her." Such advice given to a Roman matron would have appeared unnecessary to the men of the old régime; but there was now a throne in Rome, and consequently women jostled each other for the place of power behind it.

Agrippina needed just such counsel; but her nature would not allow her to profit by it. Irreproachable in her life, her virtues were not beautified by the divine gift of good humor; and she possessed no philosophy. Her mind was of that sort, more common among women than men, in which an idea having once been entertained is henceforth unassailable and undetachable by reason. Than this class of mind there is nothing more exasperating in human knowledge, and it is not to be wondered at that she irritated Tiberius. These two angered each other on every occasion of their meeting: the emperor by his cruel persecution of Agrippina's friends, and she him both by her air of martyrdom and by her evident and constant suspicion that he was planning some nefarious project against herself.

There lacked not ambitious men at the time who were ready to gather around the noble widow on the pretence of siding with her in her complaints against the emperor; they even sought to raise a party for the advantage of her children. She probably lent herself to some extent to these schemes, but not in sufficient degree to bring upon herself the violence of the suspicious and resentful Tiberius. Nevertheless, all her sons perished, except Caligula, whom

a destiny unkind to the Roman people protected from the fate of his brothers.

Sejanus, the all-powerful favorite of the emperor, adroitly fanned the ever-smoldering animosity which naturally existed between Tiberius and Agrippina. He warned her to beware of poison, after having informed Tiberius that the matron suspected that the emperor had designs on her life. So, when the emperor politely handed her fruit, calling her attention to its excellence, she silently passed it to the slaves. "Can I avoid," he exclaimed to Livia, "treating this woman with harshness, when she accuses me to my face of seeking to poison her?"

The favorite Sejanus aimed at removing every heir to the imperial throne, in order that at the death of Tiberius he might rule in name, as he already did in effect. To achieve this end, he first seduced Livilla, the wife of the son of Drusus Tiberius; then he procured by her means the death of Drusus and asked Livilla in marriage. This the emperor refused. At length,—not, however, until after Agrippina's sons had been destroyed,—Antonia, the mother of Livilla, was constrained to write to Tiberius of the conspiracy of Sejanus, and by her means he was brought to justice. Livilla was starved to death by the command of her mother.

Livia seems to have been at all times an obedient and submissive wife. She was honored by the confidence of her husband. She shared in the knowledge of his deepest political projects, and her advice was asked in regard thereto. But there is no indication that she ever sought to dictate. It was otherwise, however, with Tiberius. Whether Livia considered that a mother's prerogative was more commanding than that of a wife, or that a larger share of the rule might be claimed by her on account of

the fact that she had secured it for Tiberius, certain it is that the latter found there was not enough room for himself and the Augusta in the imperial palace. Suetonius informs us that on one occasion, when Tiberius had haughtily objected to his mother's sharing the government with him, Livia produced some letters which Augustus had written to her complaining of the pride and arrogance of Tiberius. The discovery that his mother had treasured these letters against him for so many years so wounded the emperor that he immediately left the city, and he never again saw his mother except for a few hours on one occasion.

It is said that during her last days, when there was little more to hope for and nothing else to do, Livia strove to defend Agrippina from the machinations of Sejanus and the hatred of Tiberius. For twenty years she had done somewhat to relieve the hardship of her daughter-in-law Julia's exile; but she never sought to have her recalled. Tacitus says that, having secretly overthrown her stepchildren in their prosperity, it was her custom to make an open show of compassion toward them in their adversity.

Livia the Augusta died in A. D. 29, at the age of eighty-five. The verdict of the historian is that she had been a stepmother to the commonwealth of Rome; and this perhaps expresses her politics better than any other term that could be employed. A faithful wife, a fond mother, she had relentlessly witnessed the removal of every obstacle in the way of Tiberius. For the sake of her son, she had done and suffered everything; for the people, she had done nothing. Her powerful influence had at all times been directed by her emotions; and if we should carry the study to the end of the Empire, bringing into review all the consorts and female associates of the emperors, this would still be the summary of the story of the Roman woman in politics.

Tiberius refused to permit the apotheosis of Livia; but after his death the highest honors which a superstitious people could devise were paid to her memory. Claudius caused her to be deified, and the worship of Livia was constituted one of the functions of the Vestals. An idealized statue of her was placed in the temple of Augustus. Medals were impressed with the image of her head, and it was ordered that when the women of Rome had occasion to swear, it should be "By Livia."

On the whole, the Roman people, who understood Livia's character better than it is possible for us to do at this late day, judged her very kindly. Her virtues, which were conjugal and domestic, were always popularly respected, though not generally followed. Her pride and cruel vices were readily condoned, because they were considered indispensable to the policy of rulers. Her husband was a successful statesman; he maintained his position on the throne and accomplished much for the best interests of the Empire. Livia was a successful politician; she kept the people enamored of her supremacy, but furthered no interests save those of herself and her son.

Soon after the death of Livia, Agrippina was banished to the island of Pandataria, where her mother Julia had been confined for so many repentant years. It seems that her redoubtable spirit would not allow her to submit to this tyranny without a struggle; and so brutal were the soldiers in enforcing the emperor's command upon her who had once been known as "The Mother of the Camps," that she lost the sight of one of her eyes. After four years of miserable exile, she ended her life in the "high Roman manner" by voluntary starvation.

In the Capitol Museum there is a seated figure of Agrippina. It is one of the noblest pieces of statuary in the

world. In it is seen none of that feminine sweetness which endeared the young wife of Germanicus to the hearts of the Roman legions; but there is that proud consciousness of moral dignity which Livia could not rival and that imperial manner which Tiberius could not cow. It is a sad, strong-hearted woman. One could fancy that a composite of all the noblest Roman matrons might have made just such a picture. Or it might be the goddess Roma, in whose personification are included the femininity of her daughters and also the sternness of her sons.

In the daughter of Germanicus we have another Agrippina, who was a much more adroit politician than her mother. She was shrewder even than Livia, and more unprincipled; and was favored beyond parallel in position, for she was daughter by adoption of Tiberius, mother of Nero, sister of Caligula, and wife of Claudius. The last-mentioned relation gave her a much more effective position of vantage than Livia had enjoyed—first, on account of Claudius's incapacity, and also because the Romans had allowed themselves to drift further away from the old republican ideas. Hereafter we shall study the character of Agrippina and shall be compelled to place her among those notorious women who helped to make the Neronian age the most corrupt period in the world's history. Here we notice but briefly her political ambitions. She managed the emperor, securing with slight persuasion the appointment or the dismissal of the most important State officers. She established colonies in her own name. Nor was she satisfied to remain merely the power behind the throne. When Caractacus the British king was carried prisoner to Rome, and for his courageous bearing gained for himself his wife and his brothers from the emperor, the prisoners did homage not only to Claudius, but also to Agrippina. The empress occupied a second throne and received an

equal share of the gratitude of the prisoners and the plaudits of the people. Here was seen, as Tacitus remarks, a spectacle strange and unauthorized by any former custom. A woman had never before presided over the Roman ensigns. Agrippina boldly claimed to be a partner in the Empire which her ancestors had wrested from the ancient republican suffrage.

It was with Agrippina the Second as it had been with Livia, every political aspiration was concentrated upon one object—the elevation of her own son to the imperial rule, and all the activities emanating from her energetic, resourceful nature were employed in hewing a path for Nero's advancement. Woe befell the persons who stood in that path or seemed likely at any time to have it in their power and inclination to impede that advancement. They were ruthlessly cut down in that unrelenting manner of which only an ambitious woman is capable. There were no public works, nothing broad-minded, no thought of the common good: the sole motif of the Roman woman in politics was personal preferment.

Chapter VIII

The Roman Woman in Literature

VIII

THE ROMAN WOMAN IN LITERATURE

THERE was in ancient Rome a street called Argiletus, which we learn from Martial was occupied principally by booksellers. Here those works which are cherished not alone for their antiquity, and some others possibly as good but which in the misfortunes of many centuries have disappeared, were bought fresh from their authors' hands and sold to the eager lovers of literature. Here, when a new piece by Virgil or Horace was announced, the reading public would flock, urged by the most commendable form of curiosity known to the cultured human mind. Here hundreds of scribes were employed in the multiplication of copies of those classics over which in later days have labored scores of generations of youthful students, with deep regret that those classics were not written in their own mother tongue. Those shops, or *taberna libraria,* were the lounging places of the famous men who created this literature and of those who did good service to posterity by constituting themselves the patrons of the geniuses of their age, who otherwise would have been as indigent and as barren as are the neglected authors of our own times. The men and women who received an ancient author in the name of a poet are entitled to receive a poet's reward. In the shops of Secundus and the Sosii

brothers, the literati of Rome and their admirers gathered to indulge in that most fascinating of all conversational intercourse: book talk.

While it is probable that the presence of women was not so marked and frequent in these haunts of the cultured fraternity as it is in the book shops and publishing houses of modern times, this does not signify that the ladies of Rome did not take a deep and influential interest in literature. Did not Augustus dedicate a public library in the name of his sister Octavia? There was in the Roman world a reading public so great as to appear to us nothing less than marvellous in view of the lack of the printing press; but slaves who could be set to copying were plentiful, and if a lady wished a copy of the poems of Propertius or Catullus she could procure it for a small sum in the street Argiletus, or she could borrow it from a friend and have it transcribed at home.

Great attention was paid to the education of girls in Greek and Latin literature. Even those of the poorer class received this instruction; for such an accomplishment, especially if assisted by personal attractions, often availed in place of a rich dowry to secure a desirable match. Women also were not rare who, like Sempronia, could write verses of sufficient merit to be mentioned by the serious historians of their times, though unfortunately their productions have not been preserved to us. Mommsen, commenting on the flood of literature which characterized the period of the commencement of the Empire, assures us that "The female world also took a lively part in these literary pursuits; the ladies did not confine themselves to dancing and music, but by their spirit and wit ruled conversation and talked excellently on Greek and Latin literature; and when poetry laid siege to a maiden's heart, the beleaguered fortress not seldom surrendered

likewise in graceful verses. Rhythm became more and more the fashionable plaything of the big children of both sexes."

If it can be shown that the law of the "survival of the fittest" operates with any degree of inevitability in the preservation of books, we shall be obliged to conclude that few of the writings that owed their existence to the lady authors of ancient Rome were remarkable for their merit. It is difficult even to indulge a natural desire to be gallant by assuming that to the accidents of time may be attributed the loss of much that was worthy of preservation; for the number of female writers who are mentioned in contemporary works as having attained to any great degree of excellence in authorship is remarkably limited. Some, however, there are. Pliny says: "Pompeius Saturninus has lately read to me some letters he says are from his wife. I fancied myself listening to Plautus or Terence in prose. Whether they are his wife's, as he affirms, or his own, as he denies them to be, he is entitled to equal credit: in the one case, for producing such compositions; in the other, for transforming his wife, a mere girl when he married her, into such a learned and finished woman." Martial also tells of a young woman who, he says, had the eloquence of Plato, the austerity of the Porch, and composed verses worthy of a chaste Sappho. Sidonius Apollinaris recites a list of Latin poetesses; but of them all there is only one whose work may be read at the present time. We do not refer to Balbilla, who wisely engraved her verses and also her genealogy upon the leg of the statue of Memnon; the fact that these have endured is attributable solely to the lasting nature of the medium upon which they were written.

Sulpicia, the only Roman poetess whose work is still extant and well authenticated, lived in the time of the

Emperor Domitian. She came of a famous patrician family, many members of which had been able men of affairs in their time. She was a great and highly respected friend of the poet Martial, to whose two epigrams on herself and her husband we are indebted for almost all that we know of this talented woman. Her husband's name was Calenus; and with him she lived for fifteen years, in a felicity of reciprocated conjugal affection which, notwithstanding the degeneracy of the age, seems to have been ideal. Martial bears testimony not only to her surpassing ability as a votary of the poetic muse, but also to the fact that in her life and character she exemplified a purity such as would beautify any age or society.

There is in existence but one poem known to have been written by Sulpicia; it was called forth by an act of tyranny which she rebuked with as much beauty as spirit. During the reign of Domitian, the philosophers were banished from Rome by edict of the emperor. Those against whom this measure was particularly directed were of the Stoic school; this fact helps to explain the cause of their expulsion and also the poem which Sulpicia wrote upon the occasion. Their tenets inculcated an independence of thought and manner which was entirely at variance with that servility which could allow the people to rest peacefully under the despotism of such a ruler as was Domitian. The philosophers were considered, and probably justly so, a menace to the government of the tyrant. Whether Sulpicia was directly connected with these people and whether she was included in the edict of banishment, we do not know; in any case, it is quite clear that her sympathies were entirely with the expelled philosophers. Her satire on this incident bewails the weakness that had evidently fallen upon the Roman race, causing men to submit so easily to such tyranny as that to which her

friends were subjected. She asks if "the Father of the Gods" is about to allow the Romans to revert to primeval barbarism, "to stoop again to acorns and the pure stream"; or if he has forsaken them for the care of other nations. She declares that "adversity alone is salutary for a State," "for when the love of country urges them to defend themselves by arms, and to regain their wives, held prisoners with their household gods, they combine like wasps when their home and citadel is assaulted." Then she implores her divine patroness that at least her husband may not be unwilling to abandon this inglorious ease and to leave Rome and its vicinity, since all the good and estimable have been driven from it. The poem is a noble, high-spirited production; and it proves Sulpicia to have been a woman of extraordinary intelligence and a fearless exponent of principles and ideas which the majority of men in her time found it more convenient to forget.

Sulpicia was also the author of a poem on conjugal affection which is most highly commended by Martial; but unfortunately it has been lost. Indeed, from the reference in the beginning of her satire to her "thousand sportive effusions," we gather that she was a prolific writer and that all her poetry was not of the philosophic or didactic kind.

With this brief reference to Sulpicia, our account of woman's creative participation in Roman literature must end for want of material. The real part which the women of the Roman world played in the formation of the literature of their time must be sought rather in the view which the authors present of their character and the inspiration which the poets drew from their love and friendship. That is to say, we meet the Roman woman in the poetic art of her nation as the model and also as the motive, but not as the artist. But it is very essential that we should give

attention to both these phases of feminine life. Hitherto we have dealt only with historic personages, and those of the highest class; to obtain a complete view of the Roman woman, it is necessary to see her in that broader light in which she is sketched by the makers of other literature than history. And in order that our attention may not be confined to the women of one class, we must take notice of those ladies of whom the poets sing and to whom they address their effusions.

First let us consider the woman drawn by Roman creative art. In her image, as it is portrayed in literature, we see the real person of flesh and blood, as she appeared to the literary artists. Virgil says: "Woman is a fickle and ever changeable creature;" and yet he must have found in the women of his time the qualities with which he endowed Queen Dido. She is a Roman woman, because she is the creation of a Roman. She is an ideal queen; yet one who governs her kingdom in the same manner in which a noble matron presided over the activities of her household, "dispensing justice and laws to her subjects" from the middle room, or atrium, of the temple, and "in equal portions distributing their tasks or settling them by lot." Furthermore, she is a true woman. She is the sole contribution of Roman poetry to that gallery of imaginary men and women who, having their existence only in literature, are immortal because they faithfully represent the real. In Dido, Virgil, though he calls her a Sidonian, shows how a woman of pagan Rome could love; and how, her heart being broken and her pride injured by rejection, she could die in the high-spirited manner peculiar to her prideful race.

But in all Latin poesy there is no other character such as Dido. When we turn to Plautus and Terence, we learn a great deal about women, but we encounter none

that live and move and have a being. These authors did not lay their scenes in the houses of the patricians or in the seats of the mighty; they show us a class of women that we have not hitherto met. Having studied the highest, we now turn to the lowest stratum of Roman society. We are introduced to a class of people who traffic in female beauty; and much insight is gained into that laxity of morals which was countenanced both by the laws and customs of ancient Rome. Here we are informed of the multitude of girls who were carefully trained and educated, both in mind and person, that they might make profit for their owners by the prostitution of their charms. We meet these girls as they are being sent to school in order that, at the same time, their intellects may be developed and their commercial value enhanced. In these plays, we are shown the women of the brothel; and we are less astounded at the greatness of their number than we are at the complacency with which their existence was tolerated in Roman society. These women were principally unfortunates who had been captured in war or were born in slavery, and the only redeeming feature in the picture of their situation is the intimation that now and again one, by signal success in a bad business, might hope to earn her freedom.

It is said that because a sacrifice of virtue is made by one class of women, the members of another class are enabled to live purely. If we accept Juvenal's description of the character of the Roman women as a true one, it must be concluded that the morality of the more fortunate ladies gained little by the immorality of those who were courtesans perforce or by profession; but in satire it is essential to fasten upon the worst, and to hold it up to public ridicule as representative of the whole. There is no balance, no justice, no offsetting the indecent by that

which is noble and good. The Roman woman was not at any period such a morally deformed creature as Juvenal paints her; nor could the ladies who patronized literature have been quite so disagreeable as he would have us believe. It is certain that he was not blessed with a patroness, or, in his description of the Roman "blue-stocking," the shafts of satire would not have been embittered with so much prejudice. Yet, as indicating how some men regarded the devotion to belles-lettres which was affected by the women, we will quote what the great satirist says on the subject. After depicting some monstrously disagreeable females, he declares:

"But she is more intolerable yet,
Who plays at critic when at table set:
Calls Virgil charming, and attempts to prove
Poor Dido right in venturing all for love.
From Maro and Mæonides she quotes
The striking passages, and, while she notes
Their beauties and defects, adjusts her scales,
And accurately weighs which bard prevails.
The astonished guests sit mute; grammarians yield,
Loud rhetoricians, baffled, quit the field;
Even auctioneers and lawyers stand aghast,
And not a woman speaks.—So thick and fast
The wordy shower descends, that you would swear
A thousand bells were jangling in your ear,
A thousand basins clattering. Vex no more
Your trumpets and your timbrels, as of yore,
To ease the laboring moon; her single yell
Can drown their clangor, and dissolve the spell.
She lectures too in Ethics, and declaims
On the Chief Good!—but, surely, she who aims
To seem too learned, should take the male array;
A hog, due offering, to Sylvanus slay,
And, with the Stoic's privilege, repair
To farthing baths, and strip in public there.
Oh, never may the partner of my bed
With subtleties of logic stuff her head;
Nor whirl her rapid syllogisms round,
Nor with imperfect enthymemes confound.

Enough for me, if common things she know,
And boast the little learning schools bestow.
I hate the female pedagogue, who pores
O'er her Palæmon hourly; who explores
All modes of speech, regardless of the sense,
But tremblingly alive to mood and tense;
Who puzzles me with many an uncouth phrase
From some old canticle of Numa's days;
Corrects her country friends, and cannot hear
Her husband solecize without a sneer."

It may be that the horror of learned women which was affected by Juvenal arose from his realization of that proverb which declares the inability of two who are engaged in the same trade to maintain intimate and happy relations. Whether or not he was so unfortunate as to learn this by personal experience, we have no means of ascertaining; but it is certain that while many of the Roman authors gained inspiration and influence from the women with whom they were connected, others discovered in their matrimonial relations a want of harmony unfavorable to the cultivation of the muse. In Terentia, for example, Cicero was burdened with a wife who entirely lacked that power of sympathy which is the glory of womanhood. Terentia did not appreciate her brilliant husband; and she could not anticipate the honor in which she might have been held by posterity, had she proved herself the devoted wife of so famous a man. But, after all has been said, she probably knew Cicero better than he is known by posterity. He alleged that she was so overbearing that at last he was compelled to divorce her; but in Terentia the old adage was justified which says that what is one man's poison is another man's pleasure, for, being repudiated by Cicero to the great relief of himself, she was at once accepted by the historian Sallust; and inasmuch as there appears to have been no other

motive for their union, it seems probable that the bond between them was that of sentiment.

Then there was that other Terentia, who was such a trial to the patience of Mæcenas, the great patron of literature in the days of Augustus. Her he repudiated so often, and yet received back so regularly, that it was said of him that he had been married a thousand times, and yet all the while had but one wife.

There was another class of women which furnished many of the names intimately connected with Roman poetry, not for what these women themselves did, but because of their intimate relations with the poets. As the exquisite tracery of primordial ferns is sometimes found embedded in the carboniferous strata, so these women, whose names would otherwise have perished with their generation, were, by the chances of their birth and fortune, brought into connection with literary men, and their memory has thus been preserved in Latin poesy. It is to Martial himself that we are indebted for the information that, returning to his country home after many years of absence in Rome, he finds comfort for the lack of his urban pleasures and conveniences in the society of Marcella, a lady of uncommon intellectual development and grace of person. Her relation to the poet was rather that of patroness than mistress. It would seem unimportant either way; yet she assisted in the production of literature more durable than the Empire, and her name is known to posterity.

Every reader of Horace knows of Lydia, Glycera, Phyllis, and Barine. Who were they? To have found them in that ancient Rome, it would have been necessary to go, not to houses such as have been described as the homes of the imperial women, but to those *insulæ,* or huge tenements, in which the great mass of the people

lived. There these women inhabited one room or many, according as their poverty or wealth would warrant. The latter depended largely upon their youth and beauty; for these women were light-o'-loves, who were inured to the changes and chances of their position, and could turn from one lover to another with as few heart pangs as were suffered by their inconstant friends. In many cases, they were the daughters of unnaturalized foreigners, whom Roman citizens could not marry and to whom no lot other than that of the mistress was open. That such women were the intimates of Horace is revealed by the manner in which he descants in his *Satires* on the danger attending liaisons with married women—so also is the sincerity of that affection to which he swears in his *Odes*. Speaking of those ladies who were not eligible for marriage bonds, he says: "When I am in the company of such an one, she is my Ilia and Ægeria; in short, I give her any tender name."

The favorite of Horace seems to have been Lydia, of whose "distinguished fame" he tells, but does not inform us on what account she was famous. Among the amorous epistles in which he addresses her, there is more than one that reveals his jealous knowledge of the fact that he is not the sole recipient of her favors. As a punishment for her occasional inhospitable treatment of him, he writes an insulting ode in which it is averred that she has grown too old for lovers and that her slumbers will no more be disturbed by the serenade. Horace possessed the ability, and did not lack the meanness, to castigate these women in his poetry after the most shameful manner; and that not for their moral delinquencies, but because of the suspension of their preferences for himself. Witness the manner in which he gloats over the fading of the charms of Lyce, who had sometime disdained his advances:

"Wrinkles and snowy hair render you odious. Now neither Coan purples nor sparkling jewels restore those years which winged time has inserted in the public annals. Whither is your beauty gone? Alas! or whither your bloom? Whither your graceful deportment? What have you remaining of her, of her who breathed loves and ravished me from myself? Happy in accomplishments next to Cynara, and distinguished for an aspect of graceful delicacies. But the Fates granted but a few years to Cynara, intending to preserve Lyce for a long time, to rival in years the aged raven; that the fervid young fellows might see, not without excessive laughter, that torch, which once so brightly scorched, now reduced to ashes."

As a finale at once to his love epistles and amorous relationships, he invites Phyllis to an entertainment in his country villa on Mæcenas's birthday; and among the provisions for this festive occasion he mentions a caskful of Albanian wine, upward of nine years old, besides parsley for the weaving of chaplets, and ivy to bind her hair. "Come, then, last of my loves: learn with me such measures as you may recite with your lovely voice; our gloomy cares shall be mitigated with an ode."

Through Ovid we learn of Corinna, who was his mistress and the heroine of his love elegies; but his passion for her was no more sincere than we should expect from that manual of libertinism—his *Ars amatoria*. This work is the glorification of animalism and indirectly a defamation of woman. It assumes with the most undisguised frankness that the root and source of the principal part of the attention which men pay to women is their availability for the purpose of satisfying amatory desire, and it alleges the theory that any woman will capitulate the citadel of her honor, if only it be besieged with indefatigableness

and resource. It was by such poetry as this that the women of Rome were prepared for that carnival of vice into which they threw themselves with such frenzied abandonment in the days of Claudius and Nero. In the eroticism of Latin poetry is revealed a society in which illicit love is put to the experiment; in Roman history is made manifest the resulting moral chaos.

The master of this school was Catullus; and he immortalized one Lesbia, who was the principal heroine in his love poems. It has been said by one of the best-informed students of Roman literature that the poems of Catullus to Lesbia are unique in Roman letters for the intensity and self-oblivion of the passion they portray. We learn from Apuleius that Clodia was the real name of Lesbia; and it is supposed that the latter name was given her by her lover because of his admiration of the Lesbian poetess. Many have concluded from the statement of Apuleius that Lesbia was the notoriously fascinating sister of Clodius, the woman whom Cicero so mercilessly pilloried before the judges; but the possibility of this seems to be precluded by the fact that Catullus indited a poem to Cicero in which he terms him the "best of all advocates"—a courtesy which hardly could have been overlooked or forgiven by the woman to whom the advocate had given such ample cause for hatred.

Many of Catullus's brightest pieces are addressed to Lesbia; but all are touched by the poet's consciousness of her inconstancy. At last she leaves him, and he bids her adieu in the lines which have thus been so beautifully rendered by Moore:

> "Comrades and friends, with whom where'er
> The Fates have willed through life I've roved,
> Now speed ye home, and with you bear
> These bitter words to her I've loved.

"Tell her from fool to fool to run,
Where'er her vain caprice may call;
Of all her dupes, not loving one,
But ruining and maddening all.

"Bid her forget—what now is past—
Our once dear love, whose ruin lies
Like a fair flower, the meadow's last,
That feels the ploughshare's edge, and dies."

In Cynthia, whose love and beauty inspired the pen of Propertius, is seen the sympathetic helpmate as well as the mistress. She was the granddaughter of Lucius Hostius, who wrote a poem on the Illyrian War. She inherited her ancestor's love of literature, and there consequently existed between her and Propertius that fellowship in poetic labor which is the most perfect companionship known to human experience. Though of the highest type of that class of women, she was a courtesan; which accounts for the fact that the poet could not, as he desired, make her his lawful wife. Her house was situated in the Suburra, which was the centre of "Bohemian" life in Rome and the quarter especially favored by women of her class. The intimacy between her and Propertius lasted for six years; but, notwithstanding their sympathetic tastes, those years were not passed in unbroken concord. Cynthia, besides other faults, seems to have possessed a violent temper, and in some outburst of this Propertius was banished. After this, though their friendship was renewed, neither was faithful to the other. During the illness which preceded her death, they were again reconciled to each other, which fact, more than anything else, indicates the hold that Cynthia must have had upon the sincere affection of the poet. In the seventh poem of his last book, Propertius gives an account of a dream he had of Cynthia after her death; and from certain allusions

therein contained it may be inferred that she left to him the duty of disposing of her property and arranging her funeral.

Women like Cynthia were not in any degree conspicuous among their contemporaries; they were nothing more than ciphers in the estimation of those great ladies who took a part in the game of politics. They are only known to us because their names chanced to be embalmed in the writings of the men whose companions they were; but from this distance, whence the names of the women of Rome may be seen as divested of that fictitious glory which was a mere accident of their birth, a Cynthia gains more interest from her connection with a poet than does a Julia from her relation to an emperor.

These women look out at us from the *insulæ* in which were massed the common people. We catch glimpses of their fair faces and hear somewhat of their sportive talk, but unfortunately we know little of their lives. History has not individualized the woman of the common people; literature has dressed her up in all her finery, and has posed her in natural but unusual situations. Delia, Nemesis, and Neæra, women whose love and whose loss Tibullus sang in such passionate strains, though human enough, as is attested by their fickleness, are credited with those charms which have their existence only in the imagination of a poet and in a lover's fancy.

Tibullus, unlike Horace, took his love affairs too seriously; consequently, owing to the character of the women to whom he became attached, they brought him more grief than pleasure. The first object of his affection was Delia, whose real name, according to Apuleius, was Plania. "She belonged," says Milman, "to that class of females of the middle order, not of good family, but above poverty, which answered to the Greek hetæræ." Tibullus longed to retire

with her to the undisturbed seclusion of the country. For her sake he rejected a flattering offer from his great patron Messala, who desired the poet's companionship on a martial expedition. "The bonds of a fair girl hold me captive, and I sit like a gatekeeper before her obdurate door. I care not to be praised, my Delia; only let me be with thee, and I am content to be called slow and spiritless." It would have been very surprising if the poet had been able to retain the fidelity of Delia by such arguments as these. The time had not yet come when the women of Rome did not love soldierly valor; the time never came when they were not influenced by the hope of a participation in the spoils of conquest. Shortly after the rejection of Messala's offer, the poet seems to have been obliged to leave the city; and when he returns, he finds that Delia has married; upon which, in the imagery of poetic numbers, he drowns his grief in wine. However, he soon recalls to his mind the fact that a husband is not necessarily an insurmountable barrier between himself and the lady. She must be taught how to elude observing eyes. He pretends—the wish probably being father to the thought—that he has a magic which will render them invisible. "Chant thrice, spit thrice after reciting the charm; your husband will be unable to believe the testimony of his own eyes." But Delia could not remain faithful even to such a pertinacious lover. What a moving scene is that in the fifth elegy of the first book! It is worthy of quotation, if for no other reason than that in it the poet recites the efficacious means which he has employed for the recovery of Delia, who has been ill.

> "What can atone, my fair, for crimes like these?
> I'll bear with patience, use me as you please.
> Yet, by Love's shafts, and by your braided hair,
> By all the joys we stole, your suppliant spare.
> When sickness dimmed of late your radiant eyes,
> My restless, fond petitions won the skies.

Thrice I with sulphur purified you round,
And thrice the rite, with songs, the enchantress bound;
The cake, by me thrice sprinkled, put to flight
The death-denouncing phantoms of the night;
And I nine times, in linen garbs arrayed,
In silent night, nine times to Trivia prayed.
What did I not? Yet what reward have I?
You love another, your preserver fly."

The Romans most firmly believed that there was efficacy in odd numbers.

In the seventh elegy, the poet complains that he has been caught in his own trap; for Delia is practising upon himself those arts by which he has taught her to deceive her husband. Then he appeals to her husband to assist him in watching her and keeping her from others. This appears to be a rather bold step; but, considering the class to which Delia belonged, it is likely that her intimacy with Tibullus was no news to her spouse. The address to him is nothing more than a most exquisite piece of persiflage. From this time on, however, we hear no more of Delia.

The poet now turns to Nemesis, with whom he is no more fortunate. Besides being fickle, she is avaricious; from which fault Tibullus tries to save her, possibly not altogether without a thought of the limitation of his own means. "The girl who is good-natured and not avaricious, though she live a hundred years, shall be wept for before the blazing pyre; and some aged man, revering the memory of his old love, shall yearly deck her reared tomb with flowers, and say as he leaves it: 'Rest well and placidly, and light be the earth above thy quiet bones!' "

The third book of elegies is dedicated to Neæra. On the first of March, it was customary for the Roman women to expect presents from their husbands and lovers. Tibullus was betrothed to Neæra, and was confronted with the

question as to what he should send her for a New Year's gift. The Muses inform him that the lovely are won with song; hence he determines to send her a book of his own poems. It was made of the finest paper; and upon the cover—which was yellow, the color sacred to marriage—the recipient's name was beautifully inscribed, with the dedication: *Your husband that will be, chaste Neæra, sends you this little gift and begs you to accept it.*

To what degree Neæra prized the volume is not known; but Tibullus was no more fortunate with her than he had been with the others. In a dream it is revealed to him that: "She who is celebrated in thy songs, the beautiful Neæra, prefers to be the bride of another." "Ah, cruel sex! woman, faithless name!" exclaims the poet; and then: "But she may be won yet; their minds are changeable."

The fourth book of poems published under his name was probably not written by Tibullus. Eleven of these poems relate to the love of Sulpicia, a Roman lady of high station, and the daughter of Valeria, the sister of Messala. She had fallen in love with a youth named Cerinthus, and these poems tell the story. It is thought by many that Sulpicia was the author of them and that, in fact, some of them are nothing other than her own letters to her lover. These "letters" are very short; but, if this supposition is correct, they are the only love poems by a Roman woman that have survived.

Thus she writes to Cerinthus from her couch, to which she is confined by a racking fever:

> "On my account, to grief a ceaseless prey,
> Dost thou a sympathetic anguish prove?
> I would not wish to live another day,
> If my recovery did not charm my love;
> For what were life, and health, and bloom to me,
> Were they displeasing, beauteous youth! to thee?"

There is another Roman woman who may be counted on the list of authors, and whose writings, had they only been preserved, would have proved of exceeding interest. This was the brilliant and accomplished Agrippina the Younger; a woman who was as finished a scholar as she was an experienced and successful politician. She wrote her *Memoirs,* not so much from a desire to make a contribution to history as to use them to blacken the character of the enemies of her house. She dipped her pen in the venom of hate and envy, and she found her material in the scandalous stories which floated about Rome, growing daily more exaggerated from an origin which no one knew. From this work of Agrippina, Suetonius and Tacitus doubtless drew much of the information which in their more serious productions blackens the character of Tiberius. It is also likely that, if it had not been for the facile and unrestrained pen of her successor, Messalina would have been known to us as a far less disreputable woman than she is made to appear.

Although there is no writing of Agrippina's extant, we do have what purports to be the speech in her defence which she made when accused by Junia Silana with a design of inciting Plautus to effect a change in the State, and, by marrying him, to regain her power in the commonwealth, which Nero had taken out of her hands. In it all we see nothing but the backbitings of two rancorous old women; but it was represented to Nero as a horrible affair. Nero's fears were so excited that it was with difficulty that he could be induced to allow his mother to survive until morning and have an opportunity to make her own defence. We have her speech as it is given by Tacitus. Possibly it is the historian's own composition; but it is exactly what we might expect from the fierce old empress-mother. And as it is certain that Seneca and

Burrhus, to whom it was addressed, would have with them shorthand writers, it is not improbable that Tacitus took it from the official records. "I wonder not," said Agrippina, "that Silana, who never bore a child, should be a stranger to the affections of a mother; for, in truth, children are not so easily renounced by their parents, as adulterers are changed by a profligate. Nor, because Iturius and Calvisus, after having consumed their whole fortunes, as a last resource pay back to an old woman their services in undertaking my accusation, as an equivalent for their hire, does it follow that I am to be branded with the infamy, or that Cæsar should conceive the guilt of parricide. As to Domitia, I would thank her for all the efforts of her enmity to me, if she strove to exceed me in kindness to her nephew, my Nero. At present, by the ministration of Atimetus, her minion, and the merry-andrew Paris, she is framing a farce to fit for the stage. Where was she when I by my counsels obtained the adoption of her nephew and my son into the Claudian house? when I advanced his cause in every way necessary for getting him the Empire?—Admiring her fish-ponds at Baiæ." If this is Agrippina's composition, there is certainly no lack of force in it and she was preëminently an adept in the use of innuendo. We would like to have seen those *Memoirs*.

To turn to a pleasanter subject and introduce a more amiable, though less picturesque, character. While there were few women authors, there were many ladies who knew how to appreciate the work of their literary husbands; matrons who, in the bonds of legal marriage, were companions to their husbands in learning as well as in other things. Pliny has left us a most beautiful pen portrait of his young wife. He tells how, to please him more, she studied polite literature, learned his books by

heart, set his verses to music, and accompanied them on her lyre. "How great is her anxiety," he says, "when she sees me going to speak in court, and how great her joy when I have spoken! She sets messengers about to report to her what favor and applause I have excited, and what is the result of the trial. Then whenever I recite she sits hard by, separated only from us by a curtain, and catches up with eager ears the praise bestowed on me."

Chapter IX

Woman at her Worst

IX

WOMAN AT HER WORST

IN the course of this study there have come within our view some of the noblest women of whom the history of the world can boast. We have seen women of exalted purity in high positions, stately, dignified matrons, women renowned for intellect and noble spirit, women who have bravely endured unmerited suffering; we have also noted the women of the common people, and the gay ladies who ministered to love and laughter. But our account will be incomplete, the picture will not be a true one, unless it also represents the worst that human nature has produced, women stained with some of the basest crimes recorded in the annals of human depravity. It is a story in which the sober truth can only be told in superlative terms. What Scipio feared and Cato endeavored to prevent came to pass; and at the time when Rome centred in herself all the power and glory of the world, she also reached the climax of the vice and degradation of all ages.

The moral conditions which characterized the period between the reigns of Tiberius and Nero are, in these days, impossible of adequate comprehension. It was a continuous Saturnalia, a perpetual reign of terror, a paroxysm of indecency. What renders the situation so amazing and so difficult to describe is its strange mixture

of civilization and savagery, of art and anarchy. The atrocious cruelties which render the history of that time so terrible and the lust which makes it so revolting are not attributed to half-clad barbarians or ignorant Asiatics; they were participated in by men and women whose outward life was marked and distinguished by all the signs and appointments of culture. The Julias and the Poppæas of the age were women who lived in beautiful houses; they were surrounded by a magnificence of art such as never since has been witnessed; they were the students of a literature which the world has never ceased to admire. Nor was the extravagant wickedness of the time a revolt against law; on the contrary, everything was done in accordance with legal forms. Vistilia, the wife of a Roman knight, in order that she might be unrestrained in her lasciviousness, went before the ædiles and proclaimed herself a prostitute, the law considering that prostitutes were sufficiently punished by merely thus avowing their shame. Even when the innocent children of Sejanus were put to death for the misdeeds of their father, the little girl—who asked what she had done that was wrong and if they were going to whip her—must be outraged by the executioner before he strangled her; for it was unlawful to inflict capital punishment upon virgins. While such things were being perpetrated, the ladies of Rome were studying the Greek philosophers, reading their own Virgil, and improving their diction by an acquaintance with the elegant periods of Cicero. It was an age in which the arts of civilization were entirely divorced from the best impulses of humanity, an age when the highest mental attainments were joined with the lowest moral conditions. The depraved Messalina was contemporary with the philosophic Seneca; the conscienceless Agrippina the Younger was a student of letters and an author.

It is easy to perceive that the cruelty and lust which render the history of the first two centuries of the Christian era so lurid are simply the natural developments from preceding conditions. The proscriptions and massacres of Sylla and the two triumvirates could but produce a society which would witness bloodshed with apathy, if not with delight. The total disregard of the sacredness of matrimonial vows, when political purposes were to be served, necessarily resulted in a generation of women among whom chastity was a matter of indifference and honor a thing unknown. Given a society thus, by heritage and training, predisposed to inhumanity and licentiousness, and it only needed the presence of favorable conditions for the introduction upon the imperial stage of a company of women upon whose actions the world has ever since gazed with profound amazement. Such conditions were then present in Rome in such a degree as they have never been at any other time or among any other people. The age was propitious and the circumstances were ripe for a climax in human depravity. The spoil of the conquered world provided Rome with incalculable riches; the Empire was the prize of him who could win and hold it, and of her who could maintain her position by the side of the ruler; power and the absence of restraint gave free rein to impulses which the existent conditions necessarily rendered evil. This was the *entourage* of the women of Rome under the first emperors. The ladies of the nobility were trained and urged to cruelty and prostitution by the exigencies of their position; the women of the common class, for whom tributary bread and sanguinary spectacles were freely provided, were impelled in the same direction by example and idleness.

The acme of female turpitude was attained by Messalina, whose name has ever since served as a byword

for unparalleled incontinence. Valeria Messalina was the great-granddaughter of Octavia, the sister of Augustus, both on her father's and her mother's side; thus in her veins united a twofold stream of the sacred Julian blood, which fact she never allowed herself to forget while insisting upon her demands, though it had no restraining effect upon her conduct. When only sixteen years of age, she became the third wife of the feeble, half-imbecile Claudius; one of her predecessors was Plautia Urgulanilla, the daughter of that proud Urgulania whose debts Livia Augusta had been compelled to pay. Plautia was divorced for "scandalous lewdness" and on the suspicion of murder, after she had given birth to two children, the youngest of whom Claudius exposed, being convinced that it had no just claims upon his paternal authority. But his honor as a husband was far less safe with Messalina than it had been with Plautia. That she should have any affection for the doddering, gormandizing old man—he was nearly fifty—was hardly to be expected. During the first three years after the marriage, her position was comparatively private, her husband having no expectation of attaining to the imperial throne.

During the reign of the demented Caligula, the women of the court present no figure of political importance, and are not interesting except as they illustrate the depravity of the times. This emperor was possessed with an exaggerated idea of the divinity that was inherent in the Augustan race. Therefore he deemed that, like the kings of Egypt, he should conserve that dignity by marrying his own sister. Suetonius will have us believe that all three of the sisters of Caligula were dishonored by their brother; but Drusilla was his favorite. She had been given to Cassius Longinus, but Caligula took her from him and kept her as though she were his lawful wife. He made

a will appointing her heiress of his private estates and also of the Empire; and at her death he ordered for her a public mourning, and threatened capital punishment against any person who should laugh or bathe or seek any amusement during the period. It was also declared that she had been received among the heavenly deities; and as Panthea, the universal goddess, her worship was enjoined upon all the cities of Italy and the provinces.

The other sisters, Agrippina and Julia, became involved in a conspiracy with Marcus Æmilius Lepidus against the life of their brother; and when the plot was discovered, though the lives of these women were spared,—probably owing to Caligula's intense respect for the Julian blood,—their property was confiscated and they were both sent into exile. Agrippina, however, was first compelled to perform a most unpleasant office. The family of Lepidus begged that his ashes might rest in the family mausoleum at Rome, and the disordered mind of Caligula recalled a journey which his mother had made, bearing the ashes of Germanicus. So he forced Agrippina, who had schemed to marry Lepidus in the hope of gaining for him the succession, to carry the urn that contained his remains from Germany to Rome, and never once allowed her, night or day, to rest from bearing her burden.

Of the wives of Caligula, Suetonius says: "Whether in repudiating them or retaining them he acted with greater infamy, it is difficult to say." Being at the wedding of Caius Piso with Livia Orestilla, he ordered the bride to be carried to his own house; but within a few days divorced her, and two years after banished her, because, as was thought, upon her divorce she had returned to her former husband. Lollia Paulina, who was married to a man of consular rank in command of an army, having been mentioned to Caligula as much resembling her grandmother,

who had been a famous beauty, the emperor suddenly called her from the province where she resided with her husband, and married her; but he soon repudiated her, interdicting her from ever afterward marrying another man. He loved with a most passionate and constant affection Cæsonia, who was neither handsome nor young, and who was the mother of three daughters by another man; but she was a woman of excessive wantonness. He would frequently exhibit her to the soldiers, riding by his side, dressed in a military cloak, with shield and helmet. To his friends he showed her in a guise far less elaborate and much more improper. After she had borne a child to him, she was honored with the title of wife. Caligula named the infant Julia Drusilla, and, carrying it around the temples of all the goddesses, he laid it on the lap of Minerva, from whom he begged the care of bringing up and instructing this daughter. He considered her as his own child, for no better reason than that her temper was so savage that even in infancy she would attack with her nails the faces and eyes of the children at play with her.

Cæsonia could hardly have enjoyed her position, especially on those occasions when her demoniacal husband would amuse himself with the idea of having it in his power to sever her neck at any time that it might please him so to do. She was killed at the time of his assassination; and, fortunately, her vicious offspring perished with her. The manner in which Cæsonia met her death seems to indicate that the woman not only possessed courage, but also that she cherished some sort of affection for her husband. The conspirators hesitated over the question as to whether she should share his fate; but it was only for a few minutes. It was believed by many that it was through her love philtres and licentious practices that his mind had become disordered and that therefore she was,

in a sense, the author of his evil doings. It being determined that she should die, the men who went in search of her found Cæsonia embracing the body of Caligula as it lay upon the ground, and they heard her bewailing the fact that he had not been governed by her advice. Whether that advice had been to restrain himself in his madness, or to follow with vengeful measures a clue which she had given him in regard to the conspiracy, those who heard her could not decide. Their minds were predisposed to believe in the latter explanation. When she saw Lupus, the man who had her death in charge, approaching, she sat up, all besmeared as she was with her husband's blood, and, baring her throat, requested the assassin not to be awkward in finishing the tragedy. She received the death stroke cheerfully, and the little daughter, who was by her mother's side, perished by the same sword.

To his own intense astonishment, Claudius suddenly found himself proclaimed and accepted as Emperor of the Romans. There is no evidence to show that Messalina had anticipated this change of fortunes any more than had her husband. Finding herself, however, in the position of empress, she had no mind to do otherwise than maintain herself secure in its enjoyment. The times were such that this could be done only by means of merciless expedients. This fact should constantly be kept in mind as we study the women of imperial Rome. No individual can be governed by the ideas that are prevalent in the society in which he lives and, at the same time, dispense with the methods ordinarily employed by that society. The Romans of the period which we are now reviewing believed that the best, as well as the easiest, way in which to placate an enemy or to outwit a rival was to destroy him. Messalina had no desire to do better than her surroundings warranted; in fact, she represents the

climax of immorality. There were two causes which led her freely to dispense destruction among her associates. First, there were plenty of women who would gladly have rivalled her in the affection of the amorous Claudius; and while she did not in the least reciprocate her husband's affection, its retention was necessary to the maintenance of her position. Again, her innumerable amours were constantly furnishing weapons against herself, and it was only by inspiring dread that she could restrain her enemies from making use of them to her own destruction.

In such a position as she found herself, and among such surroundings, it is not surprising that Messalina was bad. Raised, when only a mere girl, to a dizzy height; flattered and sought after by all the most dissolute of the imperial court; the wife of a doting husband who, as she quickly discovered, was absolutely under her influence; all this would have tested a woman in whose character good impulses were perceptibly present. So far as can be learned, Messalina possessed no such impulses; on the contrary, everything in her contributed to the strength of the evil influences of her environment. Her glaring immoralities, combined with the consummate art with which she contrived to befool her husband, have rendered this woman's history a monument of conjugal infidelity for all the ages.

We may be fairly certain as to Messalina's personal appearance, for there are a number of cameos and busts of her in existence, though, of course, some of these are ideal and others are not well executed. Baring Gould, who has made a careful study of the sculptured portraits of the Cæsarian family, regards it as certain that in the onyx cameo which is in the Cabinet of Antiques at Vienna and in the bust now preserved in the Uffizi Palace we have what may be considered correct representations of Messalina. Of the former, he says: "The hair is arranged in

small curls covered with a species of crown wreathed with corn. This is the usual mark of the deification of an empress as Ceres. The brow is low, the nose straight and a little retroussé at the end, the mouth remarkable for the thinness of the lips; the chin is not prominent, and a peculiar feature is the slope from the chin to the throat, forming a marked contrast in formation to that of Livia opposite. The mouth turns down, but there is a slight contraction in the corner." Of the bust, he tells us: "The profile there has a remarkable likeness to the type-giving face on the cameo. The hair is in curls, but hangs down in plaits behind, the brow is low, the eyes full, and the mouth with its thin lips and cruel expression seems thoroughly to express the character of the woman as known to us by history. The head is flat. There is insolence in the mouth, and a curl in the corner, noticeable also in the gem. One eye is larger than the other. They are not in line. The nose has been restored, so that we cannot compare it with that on the cameo. The rest agrees perfectly, though the slope from the chin is not so perceptible in the bust owing to the difference in position of the head. The brows are straight, not arched. Not only are the eyes of different shapes, but the chin is on one side. The end of the chin is square, the mouth is small, the lips fuller on the left side than on the right, and the right corner drawn up. The expression of the face is different when seen from each side, owing to the singular lack of uniformity in the sides of the face. In the same gallery is a so-called young Britannicus, and the resemblance of this child, as far as the formation of the lower part of the head goes, to the Messalina above described is remarkable. Still more remarkable is that of the beautiful statue in the Lateran, where the resemblance is very close. The boy's lips are fuller, but the whole structure of the jaws and

chin, and the curl of the lower lip, are the same as in the Messalina of Florence. If this be Britannicus, then the bust at Florence is that of his mother; and it is hard to say who else can be intended by this charming statue in military costume.

"A medical man of large experience, who at my request studied the bust of Messalina in the Florence gallery, informs me that it is that of a woman physically unsound; the flattening of the top of the head indicates an imperfect mental development, and the general aspect of the face, evidently a close study from life without any attempt at hiding blemishes and idealizing, is that of a woman whose span of life would naturally be short. There would probably be malformation of the chest. The face is that of one with feverish blood, whose flame of life burnt too fast. The face is not in itself sensual, nor at all animal, but it is insolent and cruel. The low, flat brow as well as the low, flat head show that she was deficient in all the higher and nobler qualities. In this bust the formation of the throat is peculiar. M. Mayor remarks: 'Thin lips, evil smile, ears hardly visible, jaw advancing and remarkably massive, eyes close together, profoundly sunk under their arcade, nostrils fine and flexible, lips asymmetrical, the upper lip lifted on the right, as in a beast prepared to bite, the same characteristic feature observed in Caligula and commented on by Darwin. Facial asymmetry. The left eye highest and furthest from the nose (the same noticeable in Nero and Claudius, etc.). The look cruel rather than voluptuous. An ironical smile, the by no means uncommon mask worn by pathological corruption and nymphomania.'" M. Menière, in a book entitled *Medical Studies from the Latin Poets,* also gives it as his opinion that Messalina was a victim of nymphomania. He says: "At the Salpêtrière, there are Messalinas, cases

which have absolutely nothing to do with morals." This probably may safely be accepted as the true explanation of the case, if one can rid one's mind of two suspicions. The first of these is that this much-talked-of asymmetry may be nothing other than inferior or careless artistic work. The sculptor may not have been able, or he may not have given himself the time, to carve both sides of the face so absolutely alike as to defy the criticism of sharp scientists, bent on discovering a cause for the poetical effect found in Juvenal and others. The mention of the satirist suggests our second suspicion, which is that in his astonishing account of the criminal appetites of Messalina he is straining after effect.

Now, in regard to the first of these suspicions, we have the assurance of eminent students of art that, in their sculpture, the Romans were exceedingly jealous of exact representation. Viktor Rydberg says: "It is impossible to reproach the Roman art of portraiture with flattery. It gave what the Romans insisted on—rigid fidelity to nature. It made no exception in favor of the Cæsars and their house, not even for the women. Proofs of this almost repulsive fidelity to nature are to be found. An empress, arrived at a more than mature age, is to be represented as Venus. It is possible that she would be glad to decline the honor. She belongs to that period in life when old ladies drape their withered beauties; but she has duties as Cæsar's spouse, and must resign herself to her fate. The goddess of love was the ancestress of the Julian race; and so her attributes, but not her beauty, descend to the empress. The artist has to immortalize her undraped charms, and he does it with almost brutal frankness, so that the little cupid, with finger to his mouth, at her feet, seems to sigh: 'Oh! for a curtain.' " All this may be very true of particular instances; but we know

that there were cases when the artist did idealize, as would any sculptor who would place the head of a Cæsar on the trunk of a Greek god, if he were so required. Again, at no period of the world's history has the fraternity of artists been undiversified by members of varying ability, and the task of representing Messalina may have fallen into the hands of an inferior workman. Yet, after all, it is quite possible that the asymmetry in question may have characterized the face of the voluptuous empress; still, it should require something more than a little inequality of feature in a statue not absolutely identified to cause to accept, without a large grain of salt, Juvenal's statement in regard to the wife of Claudius. That Messalina was in the habit of stealing forth from the imperial palace at night to occupy a booth in a brothel as a common demirep under the name of Lycisca is almost too improbable for credence. It is possible that in this Juvenal enlarges on some allusion made by Agrippina the Younger, who wrote the empress's memoirs and who was never a friend to Messalina.

The palace of Claudius was full of freedmen—men who had been emancipated from slavery and had found the means to amass wealth and attain influence—and of Greek adventurers. These men performed services for the emperor and his wife which as yet were not submitted to by the aristocratic or even the equestrian families. Such men as these had been the only associates of Claudius before his advancement, and they retained great influence with him during his reign. Messalina also was obliged to consider them. Their silence, in regard to her intrigues, had to be purchased; she was obliged to ally herself with them, in order that she might retain her influence over her husband; their selling of appointments and taking of bribes she had to countenance; and at last she fell into their toils and was brought to ruin by their machinations.

At the commencement of the reign of Claudius, the two sisters of Caligula, Julia and Agrippina, were recalled from exile and their property restored to them. They were the daughters of Germanicus, descendants of the great Augustus; therefore, it was not long before they were the centre of a clique of dissatisfied nobles. Julia, who was as unprincipled as she was beautiful, seemed to attract the attention of Claudius. This was an offence which Messalina could not brook. Whatever might be the extent of her own failings, she could not afford to run the slightest risk of encountering a rival in the affections of the emperor. It is remarkable, in an age of unparalleled laxity of morals, that when means were sought by which to bring about the destruction of an enemy, an accusation of adultery was usually successful. Those Romans were human enough to condemn in others what they condoned in themselves. Think of Messalina preaching of morals! She preferred charges of incontinence against Julia, and induced the easily influenced emperor to send the unfortunate woman back to exile, where she was quickly followed by an assassin under the orders of the empress. This incident is all the more memorable on account of the fact that Seneca, whose conduct never very closely conformed to his teaching, was accused of being the accomplice of Julia and was banished at the same time. The fate of her sister was a warning to Agrippina. She saw how necessary it was to use wariness in order that she might not offend, or at least that she might not fall under the power of the empress; and Messalina, though she far outdid her in vice, was no match for the clever politician, Agrippina.

It would prove as tiresome as it would be unprofitable to recount all the instances with which history illustrates Messalina's cruelty and licentiousness; and even though

our object be to show to what depths of iniquity woman may descend under certain conditions, we will only refer to a few incidents in the empress's profligate career. The first victim of her power and criminality was her own stepfather, Silanus; Suetonius conjectures that the reason for her resentment against her relative was that he disdained her improper advances. The manner of his taking-off was unique and indicates a genius for the invention of plots which may well be envied by the modern romancist. One morning, Narcissus, a favorite freedman, rushed into the presence of Claudius, showing signs of the intensest alarm. He had dreamed that the emperor had been killed by the hand of Silanus. Soon afterward, Messalina appeared and inquired with much perturbation of manner as to the safety of her husband. Her rest had been broken and her mind alarmed by a dream similar to that of Narcissus. Other things were insinuated which seemed to warrant this great and concurrent alarm on the part of the emperor's friends, so that, his fears being thus cunningly worked upon, he at once gave orders for the execution of Silanus.

Messalina was bent on acquiring for herself two desirable pieces of property. One was the beautiful gardens which had been commenced by Lucullus, and completed on a most magnificent scale by Valerius Asiaticus; the other was Mnester, a famous actor of that time. The gardens were owned by Asiaticus; and Poppæa, who was one of the most beautiful women of her day, seemed to interest the actor more than did the empress. The latter determined to remove both these hindrances to her desires at one stroke. She bribed Suilius, a man in high position and notoriously venal, to accuse Asiaticus and Poppæa of being engaged in an improper intrigue. Against the former, charges of a baser nature were included and acts

prejudicial to the safety of the emperor were insinuated. Tacitus informs us that the unfortunate man was not allowed a hearing before the Senate, but was tried privately in a chamber of the palace and in the presence of Messalina. When speaking in his own defence, he wrought so powerfully upon the feelings of Claudius that he would certainly have been acquitted; but Messalina, who could not restrain her own tears, as she left the room, whispered to Vitellius: "Let not the accused escape." Then followed an exhibition of perfidy in which it is doubtful if a mere Judas would have been unprincipled enough to take the leading part. Vitellius began in the most sympathetic manner to plead with the emperor—who was already meditating the acquittal of Asiaticus—to remember the great services which had been rendered by the accused to the State, and to exercise clemency by allowing Asiaticus to choose his own mode of death; a sort of clemency to which Claudius readily consented. Thus Messalina's purpose was so far attained. "She hastened herself to accomplish the doom of Poppæa, by suborning persons to drive her to a voluntary end by the terrors of imprisonment; a catastrophe of which the emperor was so utterly unapprised, that a few days after, as her husband Scipio was at table with him, he asked why he had not brought his wife. Scipio answered that she was no more."

The Vitellius who accomplished the above described piece of finesse with such diplomacy was the father of the future emperor of the same name. His chief characteristic was his extraordinary facility and lack of conscience in the use of flattery. When asked by Caligula if Vitellius had not seen the emperor in conversation with Diana, Vitellius answered that it was not permitted to mere mortals like himself to witness the intercourse of deities. On one occasion, in the presence of Claudius, he begged the

gift of one of Messalina's slippers. His request being granted by the empress, he placed his acquisition in his bosom, and ever afterward, at opportune moments, would draw it forth and kiss it in most devoted fashion. Thus he strongly entrenched himself in the favor of Messalina, and the modesty of his request did not lower him in the estimation of her husband.

In April of A. D. 47 occurred the centenary festival of the founding of Rome. Vitellius saluted the emperor with: "May you often repeat these celebrations." During the games, there took place an incident which was of special interest to Agrippina, the rival of Messalina, and which might easily have ended disastrously for her. The respective sons of these two women appeared in one of the games. Britannicus was then six years of age and Nero was nine; it was the first appearance of the latter upon that stage which it was afterward his unworthy ambition to hold. On this occasion, the populace were so inconsiderate as to place Agrippina and her son in a position of great jeopardy by showing for them the most enthusiastic partiality, while Britannicus was received in that silence which denoted ill will to his mother.

Messalina was at this time meditating an enterprise which eclipsed all her former exploits and which she probably thought would conclusively determine her own future and that of her son. Thus Tacitus recounts the story: "She was so vehemently enamored of Caius Silius, the handsomest of the Roman youth, that she obliged him to divorce his wife, Julia Silana, a lady of high quality, and had him to herself. Nor was Silius blind to the danger and the malignity of his crime; but, as it was certain destruction to decline her suit, and there were some hopes of beguiling Claudius, and great rewards being held out to him, he was content to enjoy the present advantages

and take the chance of what might happen thereafter. The empress proceeded not stealthily, but went to his house frequently, with a numerous train, accompanied him incessantly abroad, loaded him with presents and honors; and at last, as if the fortune of the Empire had been transferred with the emperor's wife, at the house of Silius were now seen the slaves, freedmen, and equipage of the prince."

All this time, Claudius, ignorant of the conduct of his wife,—a fact which must be attributed to the complete subjection under which he was held by Messalina and the freedmen,—was exercising the functions of moral censor and rebuking the people for the immorality of their conduct. What a spectacle to men, not to speak of the ancient deities, must have been the Roman government of those days! It is easy to see the connection between the licentiousness of the times and the decline of the State.

Messalina, a course of the most promiscuous and unrestrained licentiousness having produced satiety, now proceeded to an act of which the emperors had many times set the example: she repudiated Claudius, and united herself with matrimonial solemnities to Silius. Caius Caligula had dismissed one wife to make room for another with scant if any ceremony; but for a woman to do the same thing was another matter. Tacitus says: "I am aware that it will appear fabulous that any human beings should have exhibited such recklessness of consequences; and that, in a city where everything was known and talked of, anyone, much more a consul-elect, should have met the emperor's wife, on a stated day, in the presence of persons called in to seal the deeds, and that she should have heard the words of the augurs, entered the house of the husband, sacrificed to the gods, sat down with the guests at the nuptial banquet, and in every way comported

herself as though she had been given away in a marriage entirely lawful. But I would not dress up my narrative with fictions to give it an air of marvel, rather than relate what has been stated to me or written by my seniors."

There are indications which seem to warrant the belief that if this affair had succeeded in its object it would not have appeared so thoroughly atrocious in the eyes of those who recorded it. The whole matter is shrouded in that mystery which often characterizes the transactions of rulers. Suetonius declares that it is beyond all belief that Claudius himself, at the marriage of Messalina with Silius, should have actually signed the writings relative to her dowry, induced thereto by the design of diverting from himself and transferring to another the effect of certain bad omens relative to the husband of Messalina. But, considering the superstition of the time, of which Claudius had an abundant share, and the cunning with which Messalina appears to have been endowed, it seems entirely probable that here we have the key of the whole situation. As is suggested by Victor Duruy, Claudius, timid and credulous as he was, doubtless assured himself in accordance with the formalistic notions of those times, or was persuaded by others, that destiny would be satisfied with a marriage accomplished in conformity with legal formulas, but a union only in name. He expected that thereby he would save himself, and at the same time his honor might be avenged by the death of Silius, thus fulfilling the oracle.

But Messalina and her lover had other plans. By working on the old emperor's fears, she had induced him to sign the writing, so that afterward it might appear as though he had given his consent to his own repudiation. Presuming on her Julian descent, she may have persuaded herself that, once wedded to the young patrician

and consul-elect, together they might wrest the government from the feeble hand of Claudius and share the imperial dignity.

While the emperor was away at Ostia, the nuptials were consummated. The marriage was solemnized in due and ample form, including all the ancient rites. Silius may have pretended to drag the seemingly unwilling bride from the embraces of her friends; but the yellow wedding veil was not necessary to hide any blushes that were likely to flush the cheek of Messalina. That the ceremonies were executed in due form may be concluded from the fact that Mnester, the popular actor, took part in them, probably as director.

If Messalina counted on the fidelity of the freedmen, to whose friendship she had many times confided her safety, she erred: for on this occasion they fatally betrayed her. When Claudius was not being guided by his wife for her own purposes, he was under the control of the freedmen; what their position under Silius might be was problematical. Narcissus, the most active of these courtiers, hurried at once to Ostia, taking with him Calpurnia and Cleopatra, two women who had witnessed the marriage. It was necessary that he should thoroughly arouse the phlegmatic emperor and bring upon Messalina speedy destruction, or his own doom would be accomplished. "The marriage has been made public," he said. "Unless you act promptly, Silius will be master of Rome." He induced Claudius to transfer the command of the prætorians to himself for a day. He hurried the emperor back to the city, taking every precaution that the latter should not be left alone with Messalina's friends and that she herself should not be afforded the opportunity of a personal interview.

This unwonted suddenness of action on the part of the emperor was precisely what Messalina and Silius did not

anticipate. Instead of intrenching themselves by energetic preparations, they wasted the time in voluptuous revelry. It was the season of the grape harvest, and all Rome was engaged in the customary celebration of the vintage. Messalina, in the gardens of the palace, was enacting a Bacchanalian scene. Men were treading the grapes and wine was flowing into casks; women in the scant attire of Bacchantes were dancing around them; and Messalina, with the symbolic thyrsus in her hand, joined in the revelry, accompanied by Silius, who was crowned with ivy. The utmost licentiousness of speech and action was the order of the day. At last, Vettius Valens, who himself had been a lover of the empress, climbed to the top of a high tree. "What can you see from up there?" someone shouted. "I see," he replied, "a storm coming from Ostia." It was prophetic of what was soon to fall upon the chief participators in the scene. Rumors, quickly followed by the couriers of the emperor, announced that the latter was approaching in great indignation. Messalina was immediately deserted by all. The revellers went their own ways, and Silius repaired to the Forum as though with no thought but to attend to his official duties. The empress, thoroughly awakened at last to the gravity of her situation, began to make preparations for her defence. She saw that her only hope was in the easy, vacillating disposition of Claudius; she had never yet failed to manage him, and her assurance was great. Sending forth her two children, Octavia and Britannicus, to meet their father, she next induced Vibidia, the chief of the Vestals, to obtain audience with the emperor and implore his pardon for his guilty wife.

Deserted by all the court with the exception of three persons, Messalina traversed the city on foot; and finding on the outskirts one of the carts used to convey the rubbish

of the streets and gardens, she got into it and started forth to meet her outraged husband. Coming within hearing of the emperor, she began to call upon him to listen to the mother of his children; but Narcissus drowned her voice with the story of her crime and placed in the hands of Claudius a paper reciting all Messalina's adulteries, so that, reading it, his eyes might not be turned upon his wife. Vibidia pleaded with the emperor that he should not allow the empress to be destroyed without a hearing; but she was sent away by the freedman, who advised her to attend to the proper duties of her vocation.

Had it not been for the hasty manner in which this affair was brought to a fatal termination by Narcissus, Messalina would probably have won a pardon from her doting husband. It is true that when the emperor was taken to the house of Silius and there shown valuable furniture, heirlooms from his own palace, his indignation was great; he allowed himself to be conducted to the camp, where he made a short speech to the soldiers and constituted them judges of the criminals; but after having partaken of a sumptuous repast, his good nature, or rather his indifference, returned, and he ordered his servants to go and "acquaint the miserable woman that to-morrow she may plead her cause." The freedman knew that if Messalina obtained the opportunity to talk with the emperor, her alluring methods would save her life, and Claudius would turn to make common cause with her against her accusers. Narcissus therefore hurried forth and commanded the tribune on duty to "despatch the execution," for such, he said, was the emperor's command.

The soldiers found Messalina in the gardens of Lucullus, lying upon the ground, and by her side her mother, Lepida, who was seeking to persuade her wretched daughter not to wait for the executioner, but to die becomingly by her

own hand. This, however, the woman had not the courage to do. At times, she would recite to her mother the speeches with which she hoped to justify herself to her husband, and then she would give way to imprecations and vain lamentations. Thus she was employed when the door was burst open and the soldiers and Narcissus appeared before her. The freedman indulged his spite and taunted her with insolent reproaches. Then the unhappy woman, accepting the dagger from her mother's hand, held it to her breast, but dared not strike; so the tribune, in mercy as well as in justice, despatched her with his sword. The news was carried to Claudius that "Messalina was no more"; and without asking how she died or by whose hand, he called for a cup of wine and continued the feast.

Silius made no attempt to exonerate or defend himself, but simply asked for a speedy death. With him died a number of other illustrious knights, their offence being like his, though not so public or so heinous. Mnester the actor thought to save his life by reminding the emperor that it was by the latter's own command that he had been obliged to submit to the orders of Messalina; but though this plea caused some hesitation in the mind of Claudius, it was overruled by the merciless freedmen. It was thus also with Traulus Montanus, a young man of remarkable beauty; he could urge that only on one occasion had he been summoned to the apartments of the empress, and then immediately cast off; this plea, however, did not avail to save him.

It has been our purpose in this chapter to show how, in the midst of artistic surroundings, in a polished society, at a time when poetical and philosophical literature was universally cultivated, women, by the enormity of their excesses, touched the lowest depth of moral depravity.

All that appeared necessary was to piece together the fragmentary information provided by the ancient historians and so present a picture of this single astounding character, Messalina. She was the ultimity of feminine vice. She did not stand alone; but in her there was a unique combination of extraordinary political power, unbounded opportunity for lawlessness, and inordinate concupiscence.

But one human life is not sufficient in which to display all the possible varieties of moral unrestraint. Messalina died, and Agrippina reigned in her stead. In the daughter of Germanicus was exemplified a character very different from that of the woman we have just dismissed. Agrippina was less wanton, but she was not more womanly. Messalina sacrificed human life in caprice, Agrippina assigned men to death in cold calculation. The aim of the one was pleasure, the object of the other was power. Messalina was a most unworthy mother; Agrippina contravened every other womanly instinct in order that her son might reign.

After Messalina's death, Claudius declared before the prætorians: "As I have been unhappy in my marriages, I am resolved henceforth to remain single; and if I should not, I give you leave to stab me." But he was not able to persist in this resolution; there were many women who, for the sake of bearing the name of empress, sought matrimonial union with him. Agrippina, however, had marked that position for her own, and she was intellectually the strongest, as well as one of the most beautiful women in Rome. She was now thirty-four years of age. It was no new undertaking for her to bestir herself in the search for a husband. At the age of thirteen she had been married to Cnæus Domitius Ahenobarbus; but he had died in A. D. 40, leaving her with Nero, their only child. On her return from exile at the beginning of Claudius's reign, she

had endeavored to form a union with a powerful patrician named Galba, who had a wife then living; but for her pains she got her face slapped by Galba's mother-in-law. She was soon married, however, to an orator called Passienus, who was a man remarkable for his wit, wealth, and good nature. He died before Agrippina had set her hopes upon a marriage with Claudius.

It was Agrippina's determination to be empress, in order that her son might be emperor. Some years previous, an astrologer had said of the boy that he would reign, but that he would be the death of his mother. "Let me die, then," said she, "so he but reign."

Her marriage with Claudius would be illegal and incestuous, he being her uncle. But Agrippina aroused the emperor's desire for the match by the endearments for which her relationship provided the opportunity, and the complacent Senate passed an enactment that henceforth such marriages should be lawful. Before the nuptials were celebrated, Agrippina obtained the promise of the hand of Octavia, the daughter of Claudius by Messalina, for her son, thus doubly securing her position; this was done despite the fact that Octavia had already been betrothed to another man. Being thus able to have her way before marriage, it is not wonderful that after that event Claudius should be wholly under his wife's rule. Tacitus says: "From this moment the city assumed a different character, and a woman had the control of everything. She, however, did not, like Messalina, mock and trample upon the interests of the State in the extravagance of her lewdness. The despotism exercised was as thorough as though it were under the direction of a man. In her public conduct she was grave and rigid, frequently haughty and overbearing. No departure was observable in her domestic deportment, unless it were necessary to support her power;

but an insatiable thirst for money was veiled under the pretext of its being used to maintain the imperial authority."

As an instance of Agrippina's cruelty, it may be mentioned that she brought about the condemnation of Lollia, who had been her rival for the hand of Claudius, and compelled the unfortunate woman to destroy herself. Calpurnia, another illustrious lady, she also doomed to ruin, for no other reason than that the emperor once made a casual remark upon her beauty.

The advancement of her son was the object ever before the eyes of Agrippina; for this she lived and for the attainment of this consummation she spared no promising effort, whether lawful or otherwise. Through the influence of Pallas, one of the favorite freedmen, she brought it to pass that her son was adopted by the emperor as his own, and the historians aver that as a reward for this service Pallas received favors which belonged solely to Claudius. Step by step, Nero was preferred, and at the same time the son of Messalina and the emperor was depreciated. Britannicus seems to have been a boy of spirit. Because he persisted in addressing her son by the name Ahenobarbus [Brazenbeard], Agrippina placed over him tutors whose duty it was to teach him to respect the decree of the Senate, by which the more honorable name of Nero had been conferred on her offspring. Still, everything did not go forward quite to Agrippina's satisfaction. She found in Narcissus almost as great an enemy as had Messalina, and even the emperor was somewhat uncertain in his favor; on one occasion, he was heard to mutter something to the effect that he seemed fated to suffer the iniquities of his wives, and then to punish them. Nero was now seventeen years of age, and through the shrewd policy of his mother had not only been named by the emperor as his successor, but had been generally recognized as the

heir-apparent by the people; it needed only the death of Claudius to raise him to the imperial throne.

New wants create new professions. In despotic governments, the lives of certain persons are often too prolonged in the opinion of others who have their own purposes to pursue, and there never have been lacking those who in such a juncture could make themselves extremely useful. In the time of Agrippina there lived a woman named Locusta, who, as Tacitus informs us, was a famous artist in the mixing of drugs. Her skill seems always to have had for its object, not the cure of patients who were confided to her care, but their judicious taking-off. The above-mentioned historian informs us that Agrippina allowed this woman to employ her art upon Claudius; and as no other writer approximate to that age seeks to purge the empress of this accusation, it must be reckoned to her account. "In fact," says Tacitus, "all the particulars of this transaction were soon afterward so thoroughly known, that the writers of those times are able to recount how the poison was poured into a dish of mushrooms, of which he was particularly fond; but whether it was that his senses were stupefied, or from the wine he had drunk, the effect of the poison was not immediately perceived." Agrippina therefore became dismayed; but as her life was at stake, she thought little of the odium of her present proceedings, and called in the aid of Xenophon the physician, whom she had already implicated in her guilty project. It is believed that he, as if he purposed to assist Claudius in his efforts to vomit, put down his throat a feather besmeared with deadly poison.

After the death of Claudius, Agrippina discovered that the day was ill-omened, so that she hesitated to have her son proclaimed. The fact of the emperor's death was therefore kept a secret for some hours. The people were

so far imposed upon that they believed that Claudius was improving and desired to be entertained. Buffoons were introduced, who played their antics and cracked their jokes in the presence of the corpse; the empress, in the meantime, feigning to be overcome with grief, was clasping the young Britannicus in her arms and declaring that he was "the very image of his father."

At noon, it being the thirteenth of October in the year 54, the death of Claudius was announced, and Nero was received by the soldiers with shouts of joy. The Senate confirmed his accession, and that night, when the tribune asked the new emperor for the watchword, he gave "the best of mothers."

Claudius, unless the Roman historians are to be considered entirely unworthy of credence, had been murdered by his wife; but, notwithstanding this fact and also that she had despised him while he lived, she hastened to procure his apotheosis as soon as he was dead. How much those divine honors which were decreed to deceased members of the imperial family meant to the Romans may be gathered from the fragments which have been preserved of a satire written by Seneca at this time; the satire also indicates the contempt into which the ancient religion had fallen. Seneca claims that from him who saw Drusilla, the sister of Caligula, ascend into heaven, he derived his information as to what happened in Olympus when "a respectable-looking old man, with shaking head, lame foot, and some kind of threat upon his lips" [Claudius] arrived thither. The Olympian Senate, notwithstanding the labors of Hercules on his behalf, voted that Claudius was not to be admitted.

After the inauguration of Nero's reign, there followed for the Empire five years of what seemed to the people, so accustomed were they to the worst horrors in the name

of government, a wise and upright administration. Nero was to a certain extent under the influence of Seneca and Burrhus, men who perhaps were as good as any of their time. Credit must be given Agrippina for having at least selected the best men she could find to take charge of the education of her son. Nevertheless, during those five years occurred her own murder and that of Britannicus. After the death of the latter, Locusta—for whom Nero had found ample employment—was permitted to retire to the enjoyment of the immense wealth with which she had been rewarded for her services to those in power; it was stipulated, however, that she should train other women in the practice of her art.

Agrippina had done and suffered much to secure the Empire for her son; but she never contemplated that he would reign alone while she lived. She expected to occupy a throne by his side. Her officious dominance soon became intolerable to the young emperor. He also fell under the fascination of the beautiful but unprincipled Poppæa, who refused to share his palace with so jealous and imperious a mother-in-law. Bitter must have been the reflections of Agrippina when she found herself not only disappointed of this part of her ambition, but also saw that her son was impatiently awaiting her death. Indeed, he was devising means to bring it to pass; but she who was herself so well practised in the methods of assassination was not an easy victim. The sword was too open a method, and she was believed to have prepared herself, by taking antidotes, against all kinds of poisons. But there was a genius at the court. Anicetus, an enfranchised slave, now commander of the fleet, could construct a vessel that would fall to pieces at sea at any given moment. Agrippina was invited to join her son at Baiæ. He was all affection and again seemed willing to commit

himself to her influence. A magnificent vessel was provided to convey her to and from the villa where he had provided an entertainment. As she was returning over the smooth waters, lighted by the brilliant stars, the roof of the cabin, which had been weighted with lead, suddenly fell in, killing a man who belonged to her train. Agrippina and Aceronia, her woman attendant, escaped from this part of the prearranged accident; but the boat then upsetting, they were thrown into the sea. Aceronia, in order that she might be rescued, cried out that she was the emperor's mother, and she was immediately killed by oars and boathooks in the hands of the crew. Her mistress, however, suspecting at once the real nature of what had taken place, remained quiet, and swam until she was picked up by passing boats and conveyed to her own villa.

At the prospect of his mother's death, Nero exclaimed: "At last I shall reign"; but when the news reached him that the cunningly contrived shipwreck had proved a failure, his fury knew no bounds. At that juncture, a messenger arrived from Agrippina to say that his mistress had been preserved—she deemed it prudent to appear to take it for granted that her son was not implicated in the attempt upon her life. While the messenger was speaking, Anicetus picked up a dagger from the floor and pretended that the man had dropped it; it was then declared that Agrippina must have sent him to assassinate her son. A party of men were at once sent to her villa. They broke into her bedchamber. "If you are come for murderous purposes," she cried, "I will not believe that it is by the order of my son." She was quickly despatched with many wounds.

In the busts and medal portraits of Agrippina that have been preserved we see a face remarkably suggestive of

refinement of character. Looking at that face and remembering the accusations which have been laid against her, one is naturally inclined to take up a brief in her defence. It does not seem possible that she could have been guilty of these crimes; nor, indeed, in other times and circumstances would it have been possible. It was not a depraved will like that of Messalina that led Agrippina to the adoption of evil courses. The causes were several. She was proud; she had an insatiate craving for power; above all, her unyielding will was wholly bent on the project of placing her son upon the imperial throne. Had she lived at a time when violent measures were not permissible, her methods would probably have been more humane; but her ambition would doubtless have been as great and her determination as tenacious. In her age, murder was a common expedient for clearing the way to a prize. In her time, female modesty was a quality almost impossible to be retained, and but little valued in those few by whom it was preserved. To acquit Agrippina of murder and unchastity would be not only to fault history but to impute to the empress an innocence which in the nature of the case it was impossible she should possess.

Chapter X

The Women of Decadent Rome

X

THE WOMEN OF DECADENT ROME

AT the period with which we are now engaged, the vast majority of the people of Rome were giving their attention to one all-absorbing occupation—that of amusing themselves. The wealthy had little else to do; the chief industries of the poor contributed to this end. Never in the history of the world has a nation been so completely given over to pleasure. Production was almost entirely limited to such occupations as had for their object the extravagant supply of the luxuries of art and entertainment; common necessaries, such as wheat, were extorted from the provinces. Agriculture had become almost unknown in Italy. The rich men no longer, like the great republican patricians, prided themselves on their skill in tilling the soil; it better suited their tastes, and was more lucrative, to farm taxes. "We have abandoned the care of our ground to the lowest of our slaves," said Columella, "and they treat it like barbarians. We have schools of rhetoricians, geometers, and musicians. I have even seen where they teach the lowest trades, such as the art of cooking, or of dressing the hair; but nowhere have I found for agriculture a teacher or a pupil. Meanwhile, even in Latium, that we may avoid famine, we must bring our corn from

foreign countries and our wine from the Cyclades, Bœtica, and Gaul." The land had come to be held almost wholly by the few who were exceedingly rich. Their interests were in Rome. For the country they cared nothing, except as it provided them with luxurious retreats where they might, for a short space, renew their enervated faculties after the dissipations of the city. Their land they gave up to pasture and cattle raising, as being more profitable and requiring less care than tilling the soil. Thus there was no employment or means of subsistence for poor freedmen in the country; and so they flocked to the cities, crowding the wretched *insulæ,* or tenements, and depending mainly upon the free distributions of corn for their living. The mass of the people, however, were drawn to Rome and the other great Italian cities as much by their desire to participate in the feverish life of the times as they were driven thither by lack of employment in the country. These were the people who amused Nero by fighting for places in the Great Circus; these were the people who howled for bread and for games, and rewarded an ample supply of the same by supporting tyrants in their monstrous excesses. When it is remembered that all domestic labor, as well as all work belonging to many other branches of industry, was performed by slaves, we are necessarily left to suppose that the proletariat of Rome had little with which to occupy itself beyond the public exhibitions and the pothouses, of which there existed an enormous number; great numbers of men were, however, required for the immense armies which garrisoned the provinces.

Of the domestic life of the common people of Rome we have only the most meagre information. We know that they inhabited huge tenements, in which small apartments were rented at excessive rates. Housekeeping in these

tenements must have been conducted on a very simple scale, as one of the comic writers pictures a poor family moving to other quarters and carrying all their effects in their hands at one journey. Yet the men who issued thence wore the *toga* of the Roman citizen, tattered though it might be and having no other significance than the mere fact that its wearers were not slaves. For these men there was little occupation except wandering about the city in search of amusement and the opportunity to make a little gain by any means that came to hand. Of course, there were trades and commerce, the workshop and the store; but slavery made it impossible for a large proportion of the impecunious citizens of Rome to make an honorable living by means of their own labor. There was a larger army of the unemployed than our modern cities can show. Yet the Roman government, laying tribute as it did upon the whole civilized world, could keep the citizens of Rome from starving. For the women, beyond their simple domestic duties, the field of honest industry was yet more limited. They were employed as professional mourners to sing songs of lamentation at funerals; they could work at some few mechanical trades, such as cloth weaving; they could keep a shop. Occasionally, there was a woman of exceptional talent who made large profits by means of decorative art; among the wall pictures of Pompeii there is one which represents a female artist engaged in painting upon canvas a figure of Bacchus from a statue which serves her for a model. We read of Iaia, who, though a Greek, lived in Rome and of whom Pliny says that she was very successful in painting portraits, and especially in engraving female figures upon ivory. One matron found a unique occupation; she made large sums yearly by fattening and selling thrushes for the tables of epicures. But the majority of women who were

able to make a living did so by virtue of their personal attractions and by ministering to the voluptuousness of the wealthy, as harp players, dancers, and in other avocations still more questionable.

During the reign of Nero, there were no wars of any great moment. The old Roman passion for territorial expansion was in abeyance. The government was concentrated in the person of a man whose ambitions were histrionic rather than military. Nero was part actor, part clown, wholly debased; what could be expected from the associates of such a man, or from the people who tolerated him? If it be true that every nation has the government of which it is deserving, then the officers and people of the Roman Empire in Nero's time must be accounted as subordinates and supernumeraries in a fatuous burlesque which frequently deepened into mad tragedy. The way to the emperor's favor was not through victorious conflicts with the enemies of the State, but by means of the lavishment of fulsome applause of his own imbecile performances in the theatre and the circus. Nero never entered Rome in military triumph, as had his predecessors, followed by wagons filled with plunder and a train of captives who had been formidable to the State; he was content to win crowns from a debased people who hypocritically admired his voice and his acting, and to triumphantly enter Rome as conqueror in the Grecian games. "He made his entry into the city riding in the same chariot in which Augustus had triumphed. For the occasion he wore a purple tunic and a cloak embroidered with golden stars, having on his head the crown won at Olympia, and in his right hand that which was given him at the Parthian games; the rest were carried in a procession before him, with inscriptions denoting the places where they had been won, from whom, and in what plays or performances. A train followed him

with loud acclamations, crying out that they were the emperor's attendants, and the soldiers of his triumph. He suspended the sacred crowns in his chambers, about his beds, and caused statues of himself to be erected, in the attire of a harper, and had his likeness stamped upon coins, in the same dress. He offered his friendship or avowed open enmity to many, according as they were lavish or sparing in giving him their applause." Thus the Roman historian describes the order of that day, and from this we may judge of the environment of the principal women of Rome in those times.

Virtue and womanly dignity were inconsiderable qualities in the days of Nero. The ladies of the court could only attain and hold their positions by means of their personal attractions and by taking part in excesses from which every vestige of virtue was eradicated. Prostitution had now become fashionable. It is possible to give Messalina the benefit of a doubt as to whether or not she were a mere freak of nature. Agrippina was monstrously ambitious and as merciless as a tigress whose young are threatened; but she adopted the only means which her times afforded. In Poppæa, however, we see the typical woman of decadent Rome—of ordinary intellect, intensely voluptuous, and devoid of natural affection.

Poppæa was the daughter of that beautiful but wanton lady of the same name whom Messalina had forced to seek death by her own hand. In this instance, heredity claimed its vindication; to the daughter descended the loveliness of person and also the lax principles which characterized the mother. "This woman," says Tacitus, "possessed everything but an honest mind. Her wealth was equal to the dignity of her birth; she had a fascinating conversation, and was not deficient in wit. She observed an outward decorum, but in her heart was wanton; she

rarely appeared in public, and when she did she wore a veil, either because she did not want to glut people's eyes with her beauty, or because she thought a veil became her." It is said of her that she employed all the recipes at that time known—and they were very numerous—to prevent the inroads which age will make. She covered her face with a mask when out of doors, in order to shield it from the sun; and when at last her mirror informed her that the charms of that face were beginning to wane, she cried: "Let me die rather than lose my beauty!"—a wish by no means unnatural, for in the game which she so desperately played her beauty was her only stake. Nero married her solely for her loveliness of person. The conjugal fidelity which stands the test of changing years was not then common; and the law did not enforce it upon the unwilling. Juvenal doubtless truly pictures the contretemps which women like Poppæa had to fear:

> "Sertorius what I say disproves,
> For though his Bibula is poor, he loves.
> True! but examine him; and on my life,
> You'll find he loves the beauty, not the wife.
> Let but a wrinkle on her forehead rise,
> And time obscure the lustre of her eyes;
> Let but the moisture leave her flaccid skin,
> And her teeth blacken, and her cheeks grow thin;
> And you shall hear the insulting freedman say:
> 'Pack up your trumpery, madam, and away!
> Nay, bustle, bustle; here you give offence,
> With snivelling night and day;—take your nose hence!'"

We have no very trustworthy representation of Poppæa's appearance. There are in existence medals showing her reputed portrait, especially a Greek coin with the head of Nero on one side and that of his wife on the other; but as the former is certainly not a good likeness, it is reasonable to suppose that the other is no better. Her

face, as it is here portrayed, is of the ideal Greek type—straight brows, and nose almost in a line with the forehead. There is also a bust in existence, which, according to archæological students, may be held to represent either the mythical Clytie or the famous wife of Nero. Her hair is said to have been remarkably beautiful. It was very abundant and of a golden amber color. Nero composed verses upon it.

There were serious obstacles between Poppæa and the imperial throne which she speedily manifested an ambition to share—obstacles which, in more virtuous days, or among women possessing the slightest degree of modesty, would have been absolutely insurmountable; but with the rulers of Rome in those times nothing was impossible except self-control for the sake of honor. Nero was married to Octavia, the daughter of Messalina and Claudius. Poppæa was also married. She had been divorced from Rufus Crispinus, a Roman knight, to whom she had borne a son, and was now joined in matrimony to Otho, the profligate confidant of the young emperor. There are indications that Otho was fond of his unprincipled wife. She was the choicest treasure in his magnificently furnished house. He boasted of her beauty to Nero, and excited the young ruler's pride as well as his passion by telling him that though he were the emperor he could not vie with his subject in the possession of such an example of female loveliness. He even permitted Nero to visit his wife, but, in his self-esteem, did not count upon the result. Otho maintained Poppæa in inordinate splendor; but he was not the emperor. He could give her incalculable riches; but he could not make her the mistress of the world. Poppæa saw her opportunity. She lavished upon Nero all the powers of her coquetry; she intimated that she was smitten with regard for him; she allowed him to

flatter himself that he had won her. But she would hear of nothing but marriage. Nero was at her feet; but, having so far attained her end, she would listen to no protestations until he removed all hindrances to their union. She would be empress or nothing. With her beauty for a bait, she led Nero on to the committal of the most heinous crimes. Agrippina was murdered because Poppæa taunted Nero with being under the care of a governess. "Why did he delay to marry her?" Tacitus represents her as asking. "Had he objections to her person or her ancestry? Or was he dissatisfied because she had given proof of her fertility? Did he doubt the sincerity of her affection? No; the truth must be that he was afraid that if she were his wife she would expose the insolence and the rapaciousness of his mother. But if Agrippina would bear no daughter-in-law who was not virulently opposed to her son, she desired to be sent to Otho. She was ready to withdraw to any quarter of the earth, rather than behold the emperor's degradation." Otho, in order that he might be out of the way, had been appointed Governor of Lusitania.

It was some time after the death of Agrippina before Octavia was removed, first by repudiation and then by death. We shall have occasion to notice the character of this estimable woman in a later chapter. In the meantime, the emperor did not have to wait wholly unrewarded by the favors of Poppæa. He was entirely under her influence; but the memory of the remorse which had seized him after the murder of his mother restrained him, for a while, from adding to that crime another of equal atrocity. Again, however, Poppæa cunningly worked upon his fears, insinuating that unless he reinstated Octavia, whom he hated, as empress, the people would give her another husband, whom they would make emperor. This sealed

Octavia's doom; shortly afterward, her head was brought to Rome and laid at the feet of her infamous successor. Poppæa was at last the empress in name as well as in fact; and when she presented Nero with a daughter, he made a mockery of the title by naming her, as well as the child, Augusta. But the little one soon died, and the Senate was obliged to console the father by decreeing that his infant daughter had become a goddess.

All the historians agree that subsequent to his connection with Poppæa, Nero deteriorated in his character, or at least in his conduct. The influence of the woman seemed to bring out and encourage the worst that was in him. For Poppæa, however, there was compensation; her principal gain, in her own estimation, may perhaps be best typified by the palace which Nero built. She cared little for political power; imperial magnificence was the attraction that enticed her. Surely never did woman have her wish in this respect so completely gratified as did the wife of Nero! He built himself a house, having first destroyed many another in order to furnish a site. The author of *Rome of To-day and Yesterday* says: "It was upon the palace for the emperor that Severus and Celer, the first architects ever mentioned by name in Roman history, lavished all the resources of his boundless wealth and their skill. It seems so extravagant to say that the Golden House extended over an area of nearly a square mile in the very midst of the city, that if there had not been left, from point to point, remains of it over a considerable part of this area, the statement of the old writers to that effect would not have seemed worthy of belief." By the Golden House is, of course, not meant one continuous building; but there was an enclosure by means of three colonnades, each a mile in length, and an entrance portico somewhat narrower on the side opposite the Forum. Within this

enclosure were great courts resembling parks, fountains, and fishponds, besides the residence buildings and baths. "In parts," says Suetonius, "this house was entirely overlaid with gold and adorned with jewels and mother-of-pearl. The supper rooms were vaulted, and compartments of the ceilings, inlaid with ivory, were made to revolve and scatter flowers; moreover, they were provided with pipes which shed essences on the guests. The chief banqueting room was circular, and revolved perpetually, night and day, in imitation of the motion of the celestial bodies. The baths were supplied from the sea and from Albula. Upon the dedication of this magnificent house, when finished, all Nero said in approval of it was: 'Well, now at last I am housed as a man should be!' "

Amidst this magnificent splendor, Poppæa lived. We will endeavor to recount her manner of living as closely as we may, in order that we may know what was the ideal existence in the estimation of the majority of the women of her time.

The chief concern of Poppæa, as of all the women of that period whom age or nature had not unkindly relieved of this responsibility, was the preservation of her beauty. The Roman authors have mercilessly laid bare the methods and mysteries to which their ladies resorted for this purpose. No pains or discomforts were avoided in order to retain the freshness of complexion which was apt, in the dissipated life of the palace, quickly to disappear. Poppæa is reputed to have invented many cosmetics and face washes, and especially a mask which was worn at night, which was composed of dough mixed with ass's milk; while for the purpose of removing wrinkles another mask, composed of rice, was worn. Juvenal mocks at the appearance of the ladies with their faces thus encased, "ridiculous and swollen with the great poultice." He

suggests that what is fomented so often, anointed with so many ointments, and receives so many poultices, ought to be considered a sore rather than a face. It was held to be of great importance that these applications should be washed off with ass's milk, and the old writers assert that Poppæa kept large herds of these animals in order that she might bathe in their warm milk every day. The Roman ladies were by no means averse to assisting nature in augmenting their charms; they used white and red paints with artistic effect. These were ordinarily moistened with saliva, possibly on account of the Roman superstition in regard to the efficacy of lustration. The brows and eyelashes were frequently dyed; and so careful were the women to render nature all the assistance possible, that even the delicate veins of the temples were heightened in their effect by a faint touch of blue. The teeth had always received most careful attention. There were many pastes and powders known to the Roman beauty. Artificial teeth made of ivory had been in use from very ancient times, for in the laws of the Twelve Tables there was one which prohibited the deposition of gold in the graves of the dead, excepting the material used for the fastening of false teeth. "You have your hair curled, Galla," says Juvenal, "at a hair dresser's in Suburra Street, and your eyebrows are brought to you every morning. At night, you remove your teeth as you do your dress. Your charms are enclosed in a hundred different pots, and your face does not go to bed with you." Many instances are recorded of the costliness of the attire of these Roman ladies. They wore silk which was sold at its weight in gold. There was a kind of muslin so transparent that it was known as "woven air." Tunics were ornamented with figures embroidered in gold thread, and encrusted with pearls and precious stones. Pliny relates that he saw Lollia Paulina wearing a dress

which was covered with emeralds and pearls from her head to her feet. She carried with her the receipts to show that upon her person she wore a value of forty million sesterces; and this was not her best dress, for the occasion was only a second-class betrothal feast. At an entertainment given by Claudius on Lake Fucinus, Agrippina wore a garment which was woven entirely of gold thread.

The women of Poppæa's day seem to have been fully acquainted with the benefits to be derived from physical exercise. Agrippina, as we have seen, could swim with no less expertness than Clœlia of ancient renown. Indeed, Juvenal pictures the women breaking the ice and plunging into the river in the depth of winter, and diving beneath the eddies of the Tiber at early dawn. This, however, was for religious and propitiatory reasons. The same satirist refers with evident disapproval to women exercising with heavy dumb-bells in the same fashion as did the men when preparing for the bath. It is apparent that in this age women deemed it to be in keeping with their rights to share, as closely as nature would permit, in the pursuits and the privileges of the men; just as there were men who, beyond the boundary set by nature, usurped the position which belonged to women.

We have spoken of the bath; and it being so large a feature in Roman city life and so good an illustration—though the most innocent—of the luxury of the times, it will not be amiss to afford a little space to its description.

The Golden House and many of the palaces of the wealthy contained baths which, while not on so large a plan as the public *thermæ,* were doubtless even more luxuriously appointed. We will take, however, the public baths for our example. In the period of the early Republic, the Romans, though scrupulously cleanly as the warmth

of their country required, contented themselves with washing in the Tiber. Every ninth day was deemed sufficient for a complete immersion. As the arts of civilization advanced, tubs were placed in the houses, and a daily bath before the evening meal became customary. The first aqueduct for the conveyance of water into the city was built by Appius Claudius about B.C. 310. Seven or eight others were afterward constructed, notably that of Agrippa; so that no city was ever better supplied with water than was ancient Rome. This made possible the public baths, which early made their appearance and which must have been such a boon to the people. At first these baths were solely for lavatory purposes, and were neither so magnificent nor so much a social feature as they afterward became. Seneca relates that at first the ædiles superintended not only the decorum of the bathers, but also the temperature of the baths. Under Augustus, these public conveniences began to be characterized with that magnificence of structure in which all the emperors delighted. A great many of these buildings were erected in various parts of the city; as many as eight hundred have been enumerated. Some of these were marvellous, not only for their dimensions, but also for the costliness of the material and the artistic decorations. The baths of Caracalla were adorned with two hundred columns of the finest marble and furnished with sixteen hundred seats of marble, and it is said that eighteen thousand persons might conveniently bathe there at one time. Yet these were excelled both in size and magnificence by the Thermæ Dioclesianæ. The gift of these establishments was one of the means by which the emperors kept themselves in favor with the people. For a trifling sum, a citizen of any degree could repair to this scene of magnificence and luxury, where there were crowds of slaves to minister to his comfort

in a style which might arouse the envy of the proudest Oriental monarch. Besides the various kinds of hot and cold baths, swimming tanks, etc., there were stately porticoes for games and exercise, there were gymnasiums, magnificent galleries for the exhibition of specimens of painting and sculpture, and frequently there were libraries where the studious might rest and read after the refreshing luxury of the baths. The bathrooms proper were duplicated in each establishment, one part being open for the use of the men, the other set apart for the women. There is a hint, however, that, during the reign of some of the worst of the emperors, this propriety was not always strictly adhered to. Unless the Latin writers wilfully calumniate their own times, it was not a thing unknown for both men and women, in the private baths of palatial residences, to be waited on by slaves of the opposite sex.

Whether or not Poppæa condescended to make use of the public baths, it is impossible to ascertain. It is certain, however, that the emperors frequently joined the multitude in their sports and lavations. At two o'clock each day, the opening of the baths was announced by the ringing of a bell. Everybody repaired thither; it was the common rendezvous for gossip, recreation, and amusement. Authors frequently read at the baths their new productions to those of the crowds who cared to listen. Much of the afternoon was spent in this manner. Before taking the bath, exercise was indulged in, a favorite form of which was ball playing. Then one entered the *caldarium,* in which hot air was diffused by means of pipes leading from a furnace in the basement; then came the *tepidarium,* always followed by a plunge in cold water. While bathing, the skin was rubbed or scraped with a silver instrument called a *strigula.* The Romans concluded the

toilet by rubbing the body with odoriferous ointments, and, thus refreshed and anointed, proceeded to the banquet.

In the early days of the Republic, meals were prepared with care, but there was no sumptuousness, no art. The first signs of Asiatic luxury made themselves noted on the table; delicacy and profusion were carried to excess, resulting in extravagance and gluttony. The cook, who had anciently been the lowest of the slaves, came to be the most important officer in the establishments of the rich; that which at first was only a low and necessary employment came to be a difficult and a highly esteemed art. The price of a cook, says Pliny, was rated at as much as would have formerly sufficed for the expense of a triumph, and a fish was bought at the price anciently paid for a cook.

To make provision for banquets seems to have been more the province of the master of a Roman house than it was that of the mistress. There is a great contrast between the position of a Roman matron and that of a modern lady in this respect; the responsibility for the entertainment of guests did not so peculiarly rest upon the former as it does upon the latter. We frequently read of banquets given by men in the account of which no mention whatever is made of the wife, and these were ordinary occasions when there can be no doubt as to her presence. The guests were usually invited solely in the master's name. In Petronius's account of Trimalchio's Feast, he represents one guest asking another who is the woman that so often scuttles up and down the room. He is told that she is Fortunata, Trimalchio's wife, that she counts her money by the bushel, but that she has an eye everywhere, and when you least think to meet her she is at your elbow. Her propensity for petty management seems to have been stronger than her love for the

entertainment; for another visitor coming in later asks "why Fortunata sits not among us?" The host replies: "Till she has gotten her plate together and has distributed what we leave among the servants, not a sup of anything goes down her throat." But that this was unusual is shown by the inquirer threatening to leave unless the mistress sat down with them.

We have elsewhere described the Roman dining hall, or *triclinium*. Doubtless the Golden House had many of these splendid salons. Lucullus, who was famous for the enormous expense at which he lived, called each of his numerous dining halls by the name of some divinity, and every hall had a set rate of expense at which an entertainment in it was given; so that when he ordered his household steward to prepare a banquet in a certain salon, the servant knew exactly what to provide and at how great a cost his master wished to entertain. It is told that Cicero and Pompey once met Lucullus in the Forum and invited themselves to supper with him. They declared that they wished to share the meal of which he himself would partake if he were without company, and they would not allow him to give any directions to the servants, only permitting him to order his steward to prepare the table in the Triclinium Apollo. The man knew exactly what to do, and the supper was a great surprise to the guests, for a banquet in that hall was never served at an expense of less than fifty thousand drachmas [nearly nine thousand dollars].

In order that we may obtain as complete a picture as possible of the Roman woman's life, we must attend in imagination one of those banquets which she attended in reality.

On entering the dining hall, we notice that around the table,—or tables, for there will be many if the company is

a large one,—in place of chairs, are couches with an abundance of soft pillows. These couches are placed on three sides of the table; for it was the custom of the Romans to recline at their meals. When this custom was first introduced from Asia, the women did not think that it comported with their modesty to adopt this new style, and until the end of the Republic they retained the old habit of sitting at table, while the men lay on the couches; but at the time of Poppæa women had entirely relinquished this relic of their former scrupulousness of demeanor and were accustomed to follow the habit for which the lassitude resulting from the bath prepared them and which these prolonged feasts made necessary for comfort.

Having taken our places at the table, our attention is first drawn to the fact that all the slaves, as they move about the room on their various errands, are singing in a low voice. This is the custom of the house; at the banquet everything must be done to the sound of music. All the guests receive a crown or a wreath of flowers, which is worn upon the head during the feast. Roses are to be seen everywhere in great profusion. We are first served with some dishes which are designed to excite rather than appease the appetite; these consist of dormice covered with honey and pepper, hot sausages, and a large pannier filled with both white and black olives. On the dishes in which these viands are served we notice not only the host's name, but also the number of ounces of silver of which the utensils are composed. An ostentatious display of excellence was always sought after by the Romans.

A banquet must always begin with eggs; so, having picked a little of the afore-mentioned dainties to sharpen our hunger, the repast really commences. A table is brought in, on which we see a large hen, carved in wood, sitting as on a nest. The slaves search in the straw

and bring forth the eggs, which are handed around. The host, after examining these simple articles of diet, says that he commanded to have them placed under a hen for a short time, but he is afraid that they are half hatched. Just as we are inclined to put ours aside, we discover that what appears to be the shell is nothing but paste, and, breaking it open, find inside a delicately cooked little bird of the wheatear species. We must be prepared for such culinary surprises. Then the music strikes up, and the slaves clear the table, dancing instead of walking. If a slave drops a valuable dish, she will not be scolded so much for the loss as she will be if she stops to pick up the fragments, as though the loss were of consequence. Wine is now brought in. It is contained in sealed glass vessels, each with a label setting forth the age of the vintage. Wine is plentiful; it is even passed to us in place of water in which to wash our hands.

Now the viands are brought on in bewildering variety; and the marvellous conceits of the cook baffle description. Here is an immense silver charger, around which are carved the signs of the zodiac; and upon each sign there is something suited to it, either in reality or its image in pastry: a lobster, a goose, two pilchards, etc. There is a splendid fish, and upon the sides of the dish are four little images which spout a delicious sauce.

There must also be somewhat to amuse us; for this banquet is to be of long continuance, and there is a limit to one's eating. A lengthy interval occurs, during which a company of actors, women as well as men, take their places in the lower part of the hall, which is left clear for the purpose, and there enact a farce which ridicules the follies of the times and causes us much laughter. Other women perform upon the harp; some exhibit their marvellous acrobatic skill; and one girl, clothed only in a diaphanous, silky robe which

reveals more of her person than it hides, performs a dance which is as remarkable for its grace as for its immodesty. We may be glad that we are not treated to a gladiatorial combat, as has sometimes been the case in this same house.

After these entertainments have been concluded, an enormous dish is set before us, and in it a great boar. On his tusks hang two baskets, one filled with dates, the other with almonds. About him are little pigs made of sweetmeats. They are presents which we are to carry away with us; for it is always the custom for the men at a banquet to carry some part of it home to those women of their families who have not been present. To our great astonishment, when the servant makes a hole in the side of this boar, as though to carve it, there fly out a number of blackbirds, which continue to flutter about the room until they are again captured.

While we are beguiling our time with wine and conversing with the ladies present, a large and entire hog is brought upon the table. Whereupon our host, having examined the animal closely, expresses it as his belief that it has not been disembowelled by the cook. That officer being sent for, he confesses that in his haste that part of the preparation had truly been forgotten. He is ordered to be flogged, and the executioners prepare to carry out the command upon the spot in the presence of us all; but mercy is implored for him by the women, and his master contents himself by ordering him to finish his work there upon the table. At this, the cook takes a knife and cuts open the hog's belly, and there immediately tumble out a heap of delicious sausages of various kinds and sizes. This done, all the slaves cheer their master, and a present of silver is made to the cook.

While we are discussing this and the various other interesting episodes of the feast, we are startled by the

ceiling giving a great crack, and, as we gaze up in considerable alarm, the main beam opens in the middle. A large aperture appears, from which descends a great disk and upon it are hung many beautiful presents for the guests, also fruits of various kinds which when touched throw out a delicious liquid perfume.

Thus, eating and conversing and viewing these wonders and the various performances of the entertainers, the feast begun in the early evening has endured until the night has grown late. Wine has been flowing without stint, and its effect is to be seen among the company. The ladies present have indulged with almost as great freedom as the men. Tongues have become loosened and stories are told and allusions made which might bring the blush to some cheeks, were they not already flushed with wine. The feast is likely to end in a revel. Men take the wreaths of flowers from the heads of the women and dip them in the wine, which they then drink as a mark of gallantry. There is no longer need for the actors and female entertainers; the male guests play the buffoon, and matrons, throwing aside their robes, dance, though possibly with less grace, certainly with no more modesty than did the professional women who had been hired for that purpose. Pranks are played upon those who have fallen into an intoxicated stupor. Some are roaring bacchic songs, some are loudly arguing concerning politics, giving vent to opinions for which they may have to give an account to the emperor on another day; some are brawling, while others are conversing with the women in such unrestrained fashion as leaves no room for wonder at the numerous matrimonial readjustments which are characteristic of these times.

These are some of the features of such banquets as those to which the women of Poppæa's time were accustomed. We have drawn our description principally from

A ROMAN BANQUET

After the painting by Albert Baur

Around the tables, in place of chairs, are couches with an abundance of soft pillows. These couches are placed on three sides of the table; for it was the custom of the Romans to recline at their meals. When this custom was first introduced from Asia, the women did not think that it comported with their modesty to adopt this new style, and until the end of the Republic they retained the old habit of sitting at table. . . . After these entertainments have been concluded, an enormous dish is set, and in it a great boar. On his tusks hang two baskets, one filled with dates, the other with almonds. About him are little pigs made of sweetmeats; they are presents to be carried away; it is the custom for men at a banquet to carry some part of it to those women of their families who have not been present. . . . when the servant makes a hole in the side of this boar, as though to carve it, out fly a number of blackbirds, which continue to flutter about the room until recaptured.

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Petronius's inimitable account. Though in Trimalchio's Feast there was, so far as it appears, no other woman besides his wife, yet we know from other sources that the presence of women at such entertainments was common. There is no evidence to the effect that they were in the habit of leaving the *triclinium* before the unrestrained indulgence in wine had made their presence there entirely inconsistent with any ideas of strict propriety; indeed, if the poets are to be credited, it often happened that love making of an ardent nature was carried on in the confusion which marked the termination of these feasts.

Poppæa had married an imperial actor. Even at so late a period as the days of Julius Cæsar, a citizen lost his civic rights by appearing on the stage; but now the whole Roman Empire bent in fulsome adulation before a crazy ruler who strained a wretched voice to sing *Canace in Labor*. The Forum had become silent; the temples were frequented, but with little faith or sincerity on the part of the worshippers. The public life of Rome centred in the theatre and the circus. "After the market place has been designed," says Vitruvius, "a very healthy spot must be chosen for the theatre, where the people can witness the dramas on the feast days of the immortal gods." In the days of Nero, the Roman people did not wait for a religious motive in order that they might indulge in shows which were certainly morally unhealthy, however salubrious may have been the site of the theatre. The most popular and best remunerated public servants were actors and actresses, dancing women and female musicians. Mommsen, commenting on the condition of theatrical art at an earlier time than that of Nero, says: "There was hardly any more lucrative trade in Rome than that of the actor and the dancing girl of the first rank. The princely estate of the tragic actor Æsopus amounted to two hundred

thousand pounds sterling; his still more celebrated contemporary Roscius estimated his annual income at six thousand pounds, and Dionysia the dancer estimated hers at two thousand pounds." Later he adds, as indicating what was popular at the time: "It was nothing unusual for the Roman dancing girls to throw off at the finale the upper robe and to give a dance in undress for the benefit of the public."

There is in existence an epitaph of a girl named Licinia Eucharis, who is reputed to have been the first female to appear on the public Greek stage in Rome. She died at the age of fourteen; but, notwithstanding her tender years, she was "well instructed and taught in all arts by the Muses themselves."

The theatrical displays of the Romans had always been characterized by vulgarity and coarseness. The ancient Atellan farces were as full of obscenity as were the fescennine songs of broad allusions. This being so, even in the days when the Roman people deified chastity, it naturally follows that unbounded license must have prevailed in the degenerate days of the Empire. The surfeited taste of the licentious populace was gratified by hordes of women as well as men, who strove to give new piquancy to their exhibitions by the shamelessness of their performances.

There is some evidence, however, to show that now and again there was an actress who endeavored to "elevate the stage." Horace reports that when Arbuscula was hissed by the people, though doubtless she was giving a good performance, she had the courage to retort: "It is enough for me that the knight Mæcenas applauds"; but such a spirit was unusual, and the Roman theatre continued to deteriorate. As is always the case in such matters, the demand created the supply; but the supply also renewed and strengthened the taste from which sprung the demand.

Watching some gladiators who had been condemned to mortal combat, a Roman argued with Seneca that they were criminals and deserved their fate. "Yes," answered the philosopher; "but what have you done that you should be condemned to witness such an exhibition?"

The moralist's stricture on their amusements was not concurred in by the great mass of his female compatriots. Patrician and plebeian, rich and poor, the women of Rome craved the realistic scenes of the theatre and the terrible excitements of the circus with as much avidity as did the men. Augustus had ordered that women should not be present at the exhibitions of wrestlers, and that they should only be allowed to witness gladiatorial combats from the upper and remote part of the theatre; but in the days of Nero, the sex was placed under no such restrictions. Augustus also severely punished an actor who allowed a married woman, dressed as a boy, to wait upon him at table; but afterward it became common for patrician ladies to be the paramours of gladiators and pantomimists, with no fear of punishment save the immortal lashings of the poetic satirists. These lashings, it is evident, had no deterrent effect; despite the sarcasms of Juvenal, the Ælias and Hispullas continued to be enamored of tragic actors. Hippia, though the wife of a Senator, accompanies a gladiator to Alexandria. She dines among the seamen, walks the deck in a rolling sea, and delights to take a hand at the ropes. What was the attribute that captivated her? Sergius was not handsome; "but then, he was a swordsman. The sword made its wielder as beautiful as Hyacinthus. It was this she preferred to her children, her native land, and her husband. It is the steel of which women are enamored. This same Sergius, if he were discharged from the arena, would be no better than her husband in her eyes."

In the times of the most dissolute emperors, the people of Rome lived chiefly to attend the theatre and the circus; after bread, all they asked for was shows. There were theatres in Rome capable of seating eighty thousand persons. We may imagine such a concourse waiting while Nero dines in their presence in the imperial box, and allays their impatience by shouting: "One more sup, and then I will present you with something that will make your ears tingle." But it is likely that the Roman ladies of noble birth were wont to hear the announcement of Nero's performances with little anticipatory pleasure. They dared not absent themselves, for there were spies who would report to the emperor their failure to attend; and, being present, they were compelled to submit to the infliction of the whole of the wretched exhibition; for on such occasions the doors were absolutely closed against all egress. So thoroughly was this rule carried out that there are reports of infants having been born in the theatre while Nero was displaying his skill as an actor. More than that, it was never known when or under what circumstances the lightning of his malicious displeasure would fall upon some unlucky head. Once, when he was playing and singing in the theatre, he observed a married lady dressed in the shade of purple which he had prohibited. He pointed her out to his officers, and she was not only stripped of her raiment, but her property was also practically confiscated by means of fines.

Yet doubtless the fact that they were afforded the strange privilege of witnessing the acting of an emperor did serve to arouse the interest of the blasé Roman populace. Legitimate histrionic art had become for them tiresome, as it always does where luxury and pampered idleness tend to blunt the artistic conscience. Nothing less than libidinous vaudeville, in which matrons of noble

birth were by bribes or threats induced to take part, could create the least sensation. Realistic performances were more popular still. The actors in these were found in the dungeons, therefore they were not costly and required little training. A much truer idea of agony is obtained by watching a man really suffer than by seeing it mimicked by an actor; and if the piece to be staged includes a death, why not provide the audience with the opportunity of seeing a criminal die in the manner designated? These were the scenes to which the women of Rome grew accustomed, with the result that, for the evil-disposed, bloodshed was no more than a pastime, while for the better-natured it at least enabled them to look upon their own death with diminished terror. But the favorite exhibition with the Roman populace was the sanguinary gladiatorial encounter. Ten thousand men were constantly kept and trained, that the people might witness their combats to the death with each other or with ferocious animals. These combats were to be seen in greater perfection at a later day than that of Poppæa, in the Colosseum—the most stupendous show place ever erected by man, and in which was exemplified the most enormous wickedness that has disgraced the name of humanity. In the central space was "the sand," the arena, often red and soaked like a battlefield with human blood. Around this was a gilded fence to prevent the animals or the more desperate men from rushing with deadly hate upon the unfeeling audience. Behind that stood the marble *podium,* on which were placed the imperial seats and those of the nobility. Then came, tier above tier, the seats of the commoner people, who oftimes made the vast edifice resound with their roar—more dreadful than that of the forest king: "To the lions!" In the front seats and behind them sat women, beautiful of face but hardened in disposition, who, when a man was

mortally wounded, cried: "*hoc habet* [he has it!]" with an excitement as unsympathetic as that which delighted their male companions; and who, when an unfortunate combatant lowered his arms in token of defeat, were as likely to point their thumbs downward, in sign that the unfortunate man was forthwith to be despatched, as to raise them in token of mercy.

So long as Petronius, the man of taste, was the "arbiter" of Nero's amusements, the people of Rome were not called upon to witness the most outrageous examples of imperial depravity. Yet it must be confessed that, if the women described in the *Satyricon* are to be accepted as being typical of the majority of the Roman ladies, their morals could not suffer much by the influence even of a Nero. Tigellinus incited the emperor to greater lengths of profligacy than he otherwise would have reached. Tacitus describes the feast given by Tigellinus, for which "he built, in the lake of Agrippa, a raft which supported the banquet, which was moved to and fro by other vessels drawing it after them. He had procured fowl and venison from remote regions, and fish from far-off seas. Upon the margin of the lake were erected brothels, filled with ladies of distinction, and over against them other women whose profession was apparent by the scantiness of their attire. As soon as darkness came on, the surrounding dwellings echoed with the music, and in the groves brilliant lights revealed everything that was obscene and improper."

During the reign of the dissolute emperors, the virtue of women was but little respected. Nero denied that any person was sincerely chaste. If a woman of any social prominence in those days desired to retain her honor, her beauty was her greatest misfortune. No ties or obligations, not even the sanctity of the Vestals, were respected by the lustful tyrants. If a man rejoiced in a beautiful

and modest wife, she might any day be requested to appear at the palace; and the husband, if he would preserve his life, was compelled to bear the dishonor in silence. Occasionally, however, there was a woman who showed more spirit; Mallonia publicly upbraided Tiberius for his wickedness, and then went home and killed herself. But the condition of morals was such that there were a great many wives and husbands who did not regard such tyranny with any special degree of horror. Piso, who was put to death for his conspiracy against Nero, had robbed his friend Domitius Silius of his wife, who was, the historian informs us, a depraved woman and void of every recommendation but personal beauty; but "both concurred, her husband by his passiveness, she by her wantonness, to blazon the infamy of Piso."

Among these characters there was but little of that chaste love which glorifies the marriage bond. Poppæa could have had no regard for the despicable Nero; her sole concern was that she might be empress, and maintain herself in that exalted position. The emperor prized nothing in his wife except her incomparable beauty; and he placed her beside himself on the throne only because it was necessary that Cæsar should have legitimate heirs.

As to the character of Poppæa, Josephus credits her with being very religious, and Tacitus says that she was much given to consulting with soothsayers and eastern charlatans. Yet it may have been that, notwithstanding her wild profligacy and shameless ambition, Poppæa felt the vacuity of the glittering show by which she was surrounded, and that at times a restless conscience compelled her to grope among the tangled mysteries of the spiritual life. At the same time, it has been suspected—and the suspicion is not totally without warrant—that the Roman Jews, in their bitter animosity against the Christians, were

aided by the empress in instigating that persecution which rendered the reign of Nero so superlatively infamous.

It was rare for an imperial consort to come to other than a violent end; and Poppæa was no exception to the rule. Her death was the act, though unpremeditated, of her husband. One day, she found fault with him for returning later than she desired from a chariot drive. Angered by her upbraidings and brutal by nature, he kicked her, and, being in a condition of pregnancy at the time, she shortly afterward died of the blow. It is said that her body was not consumed by fire, as was the custom of the Romans, but embalmed in Jewish fashion and placed in the tomb of the Julian family. She was, however, given a splendid funeral; and there is no stronger witness to the terrible moral apathy which characterized the times than the fact that her murderous husband delivered on the occasion a laudatory oration. From the rostrum, he magnified "her beauty and her lot, in having been the mother of an infant enrolled among the gods." There being nothing else in her character to extol, he treated her gifts of fortune as having been so many virtues. It is impossible to doubt that the ancient historian is correct when he asserts that though the people were obliged to put on an appearance of mourning, they could but rejoice at the death of this woman, when they remembered her lewdness and her cruelty; and although, as Pliny tells us, all Arabia did not produce in a whole year as many spices as were consumed at the funeral of Poppæa, there was no incense, material or eulogistic, by which it was possible to overcome the evil odor of her life.

The reign of Nero was typical of other ages that were to follow. The Roman people were to drink still deeper of the dregs of servility, and they were to become yet more morally apathetic, before they would awaken to better

things. Poppæa was simply a woman of her time, and she was followed by generations of women, both of high and low degree, who were like-minded with herself. Imperial prostitutes and plebeian courtesans run riot through all the long drawn out decadence of the Roman Empire; but, although a veritable picture of the Roman woman could not be given without the inclusion of such types as those delineated in this and the preceding chapter, we will at least spare ourselves and the reader further recital of vice and crime by confining the exemplification to this one period. We have not refrained from including the worst features and employing the darkest colors that history warrants, in order that, to use the expression of Tacitus, we may not have to repeat instances of similar extravagance.

Although Nero was a monster of iniquity, he was not denied the disinterested love of women. That strange, strong passion which holds woman's heart to the most unworthy objects and feeds itself with idealizations made the name of Nero dear to some when it was execrated by all the world besides. And when at last he was driven from the throne, and, uttering the words: "I yet live, to my shame and disgrace," drove the suicidal dagger through his throat, there were women who tenderly cared for that body which sycophantic courtiers extolled while it lived and neglected when it was dead and powerless. His nurses Ecloge and Alexandra, who had cared for him when he was an innocent boy, and that Acte who had been his first love and who had never entirely lost her influence over him, laid his ashes in the tomb of his fathers, and grieved over a death which gave to the world at large great cause for rejoicing.

Chapter XI

Good Women of Nero's Reign

XI

GOOD WOMEN OF NERO'S REIGN

THE immoralities which characterized the reigns of some of the first emperors must be considered as abnormal outbreaks rather than as permanent conditions. The element of corruption is always present in the social body. As a rule, it reveals itself only to those who look for it in the slums and prisons and criminal haunts, but at times and under certain conditions it breaks out with excessive virulence, and, to adopt a Biblical figure, there seems to be no soundness in the whole body. Such conditions were present during the period we have been studying. Many circumstances combined to bring all the corruption and immorality which are usually veiled or disguised into prominent view and to make them fashionable. The accidents of birth placed upon the imperial throne men who were morally insane; consequently, the evil-disposed found themselves in a paradise of crime, while the ambitious, the covetous, and the cowardly were enabled to gain their ends and preserve their safety only by becoming caterers to and companions in their masters' lusts.

It is very easy, however, for a student of history to encourage an exaggerated idea of Roman depravity, even as it was in the days of Messalina and Poppæa. Whence do we obtain our picture of the Rome of those times?

Partly from historians; but very largely from such writers as Juvenal, Petronius, and Apuleius. The historians confined their accounts to the prominent people of their times, and it not unfrequently happened that the most prominent and successful were the least commendable from the moral standpoint. The moralists necessarily placed the worst in the boldest relief, in order to ensure a more telling effect. Seneca held such writers up to ridicule, when he said: "Morals are gone; evil triumphs; all virtue, all justice, is disappearing; the world is degenerating. This is what was said in our fathers' days, it is what men say to-day, and it will be the cry of our children." And yet, the world does not grow worse. As for the society portrayed by Petronius and Apuleius, these men sought their characters among the low pothouses and the brothels of Rome. The morals of the ordinary Roman home must not be judged by a scene either in a house of ill fame or in the palace of a crazy and dissolute tyrant, any more than the common life of Herculaneum or Pompeii is to be conjectured solely from the obscene pictures found on the walls of their ruined dwellings.

In this present chapter, the women we shall cite are chiefly those who were ennobled in their deaths rather than in their lives. That is to say, though they lived well, had it not been for their brave manner of dying their names would not have been preserved in history.

As has been said, Roman society was not wholly corrupt, even though an adulterous Messalina, an unprincipled Poppæa, or a cruel and ambitious Agrippina, shared the throne. Contemporary with these were women who still with pure hands and sincere hearts invoked the ancient goddess of chastity. There were those who had mother love for their children, but were free from deadly ambition. Among the more ordinary homes were many that

were graced with the same family loyalty and tender affection as beautify our homes to-day.

The young women of the days of Claudius were not obliged to search in the musty annals of past times for examples of feminine honor and virtue. They had all known Antonia, the virtuous daughter of Octavia and Antony, who, like Agrippina, had honored her widowhood by a long and irreproachable chastity. Yet the maidens of Messalina's age may have been the less attracted by the example of Antonia because, while she retained the old Roman purity of morals, she also exemplified the old Roman severity of manners. Claudius, her son, never ceased to stand in awe of her, and during his childhood her severity to him was such that it is supposed that it helped to induce his imbecility. When her daughter Livilla had been betrayed into crime by means of the arts of Sejanus, Antonia was even more inexorable than Tiberius, against whom the plot had been laid, and she caused the young woman to be starved to death. It was not an instance of cruelty, it was simply the old Roman justice, in which personal or even maternal feeling was allowed no place. Antonia's goodness was not of the attractive kind. We must imagine her as a proud, puritanical old matron, who made herself a terror to wrong doers. She courageously rebuked her grandson Caligula for his enormities; but the young ruffian, who possessed neither the mind nor the conscience to respect age or kinship, in return caused Antonia to be put to death—though it is possible that the actual deed may have been her own.

It was asked of old: "Can a clean thing come out of an unclean?" The affirmative answer to this question is found in the person and character of Octavia, the daughter of Messalina the infamous. Indeed, the axiom that "like produces like" cannot be applied to moral character; so

many instances are met with of bad offspring from noble parentage and virtuous children from immoral antecedents that they cannot be regarded as exceptions to the rule.

Octavia was fortunate in nothing but her character. She was the plaything of a relentlessly adverse fate. The whole of her short life is an illustration of the fact that goodness of disposition does not protect its possessor from the worst evils of existence. That this young girl remained virtuous amid the whirl of immorality in which she was reared, with no lovable example and no motherly advice, is a proof of the invincibility of a good disposition if nature has woven it into a human character.

As a little child, Octavia had been petted and fondled by her father, the poor old Emperor Claudius, who, dull and phlegmatic as he was, would have been a good-hearted man if he had not been thrust into a position for which he was totally unfitted. He loved to take Octavia and her little brother Britannicus to the theatre and hold them with a father's pride before the admiring eyes of the people. This was all the love that Octavia ever knew. One of her earliest and saddest experiences was to be sent by Messalina out upon the road to Ostia, to meet Claudius and plead vainly for that unworthy mother's life. Then Agrippina came to the palace; and with her in the double capacity of empress and stepmother, Octavia found no cause of thankfulness for the change. Hitherto she at least had not been used as a mere tool to effect some other's political ambitions. Her father Claudius had betrothed her to Lucius Silanus, a celebrated and favorite Senator. Had this match been allowed to remain undisturbed, it is possible that Octavia's lot might have been peaceful and happy; but a false charge against Silanus was trumped up by the perfidious Vitellius, so that the former was degraded from the Senate, and immediately

afterward he committed suicide. Octavia lived on and encountered the terrible misfortune of being betrothed to Nero, whom Seneca was advising to "compensate himself with the pleasures of youth without compunction." Agrippina threw Octavia to her son, just as a rope might be tossed to a mountain climber to enable him to ascend a difficult pass; when its use has been served, it is looked upon as a piece of mere cumbersome baggage. So Nero considered his wife, after he had obtained the Empire. When he expressed his dislike for her, the plain-spoken Burrhus said: "Very well, send her away; but of course you will give up her dower with her;" which was nothing less than the throne of Claudius.

Had Octavia been supported by some all-powerful and sympathetic relative like Augustus, she might have survived and have shown as great patience with the vices of Nero as her ancestral namesake showed with those of Antony; but she was left unprotected amidst numerous opposing forces which, when not aimed with deadly hatred against her, were indifferent to her welfare, with the consequence that she was speedily and mercilessly crushed.

The first woman who took the place which Octavia never held in Nero's affections was the Greek freedwoman Acte. The wild young emperor would have divorced his wife and married the Greek forthwith, but he was still under the domination of the powerful Agrippina. This first thwarting of the imperial will was the beginning of Agrippina's downfall. It was not long before she and the young wife saw a fearful presage of their own fate when the young Britannicus fell dead upon the banquet floor, poisoned by the diabolical art of Nero's instrument, Locusta. Octavia, though so young, was not entirely ignorant as to what the perils of her situation demanded. She had received early lessons in a terrible school. Consequently,

when Nero declared to the alarmed guests that her brother was habitually afflicted with the falling sickness, she disguised her sisterly grief and composedly retained her place at the banquet.

But the time came when Agrippina had also fallen a victim to her son's inhumanity, and Nero, responsible to no human being, had become enamored by the more attractive fascinations of a more unprincipled woman than Acte. "Why does not Nero," the tyrant asks of himself, "banishing all fear, set about expediting his marriage with Poppæa? Why not put away his wife Octavia, although her conduct is that of a modest woman, since the name of her father and the affection of the people have made her an eyesore to him?" With Poppæa urging him on and the villainous Tigellinus exercising his diabolical ingenuity to find a plausible excuse, it was not long before the courage of Nero was equal to the audacious act of driving from the imperial palace the woman through connection with whom he had his right of tenure there. Octavia was divorced by process of law, under the allegation that she was barren. At first she was awarded the house of Burrhus and the estate of Plautus, whom Nero had recently put to death. The divorce being sought by her husband for no fault of hers, he was obliged, if the strict letter of the law had been observed, to give up with her the whole of her dowry; but for men like Nero, who execute the laws, a mere pretence of legality suffices. Poppæa had brazenly endeavored to trump up a far more serious charge against the woman she injured; but it could not be made to hold. She bribed one of Octavia's domestics to assert that her mistress had participated in an amour with Eucerus, an Alexandrian flute player; but this accusation was so preposterously inconsistent with Octavia's well-known character that, even though they tortured her

servants, they could gain no evidence which they dared to set before the people in substantiation of the charge. There could be no stronger testimony to the amiability and lovableness of Octavia, as well as to the purity of her character, than the fidelity with which her servants defended her reputation from all aspersions, even while they were undergoing the most intense torture. One brave maid, while being examined upon the rack, spat in the face of Tigellinus, who was urging a confession, and declared aloud that "the womb of Octavia was purer than his mouth." It was among slaves like these that the first Christian martyrs were found; women who gave their bodies to the most excruciating torture, but could not be induced to deny their faith.

Soon after Octavia's divorce, she was banished into Campania, where she was kept in close confinement, and a guard of soldiers was placed over her. But though the Senate and the nobility had become absolutely enslaved to the imperial tyrant's will, there was always the people to reckon with. The common women talked loudly but sympathetically of Octavia's persecuted innocence. The men took up the cry; they made it heard in the theatre and they scribbled it upon the walls. The people could not be individualized. They had not but one neck, as Caligula had so maliciously wished. Their number and individual insignificance rendered it possible for them to express their mind with impunity. Nero hastened to recall Octavia to the city.

That was a day of proud but dangerous joy for the unfortunate young empress. At least she had the satisfaction of knowing that all the world believed in her innocence. In their happiness, the multitude went to the Capitol and thanked all the gods for her return. They threw down the statues of Poppæa, and wherever they could find one

of Octavia they wreathed it with flowers and removed it to the Forum or to some temple. They even went to the palace to applaud Nero for bringing back his banished wife, but were driven thence by the soldiery.

All this served only to incite Poppæa to take the most desperate measures. She approached Nero with such artful insinuations in regard to the possibility of the people's revolting in favor of Octavia, and at the same time with a pretence of such meek submissiveness in regard to her own personal fortunes, that the emperor was induced both by fear and passion to take the course which she desired.

A method of getting rid of Octavia without incurring danger was not easy to devise; but Nero had at his court a man who was a genius in the art of removing formidable impediments. Anicetus had proved his ability upon Agrippina. He was not only resourceful, but absolutely without either honor or conscience. It was not alone necessary that Octavia should be destroyed, but her death must take on the semblance of a justified punishment. There was none who could or would testify aught against her. Nero summoned Anicetus and told him "that he alone had saved the life of his prince from the dark devices of his mother; now an opportunity for a service of no less magnitude presented itself, by relieving him from a wife who was his mortal enemy. There was no need of force or arms; he had only to admit of adultery with Octavia!" The dastardly freedman forthwith began to boast among his friends of the favors he received from the young empress. On being summoned to a council of the friends of Nero, he made a pretended confession. He was condemned to banishment to Sardinia, where he lived in great luxury until he died a natural death.

Nero published an edict in which he stated that Octavia had been discovered seeking, through the corruption of

Anicetus, the admiral, to engage the fleet in a conspiracy, and that her infidelity was clearly proved. Octavia was sent to the island of Pandataria. Tacitus says: "Never was there any exile who touched the hearts of the beholders with deeper compassion. Some there were who still remembered to have seen Agrippina the Elder banished by Tiberius; the more recent sufferings of Julia were likewise recalled to mind—that Julia who had been confined there by Claudius. But they had experienced some happiness, and the recollection of their former splendor proved some alleviation of their present horrors." Everything in Octavia's life that promised pleasure had been turned to gall. Her home recalled the scenes of her father's poisoning and her brother's murder; her marriage rights had been first usurped by a handmaid and then by a woman known to be of infamous character; and now even her memory was to be stained with the imputation of a crime which was more intolerable to her than death itself. There is no sadder picture in all history than that of this girl,—she was only twenty,—after her short life of uninterrupted sorrow and unstained innocence, thrown among centurions and common soldiers, who dared not help her even if a feeling of pity entered their hearts. They commanded her to die; but she had not the strength or the courage of Antonia. She pleaded that she was now a widow, and that the emperor's object having been gained he had no cause to fear anything from her. She invoked the name of Agrippina, and said "that had she lived, her marriage would have been made no less wretched, but she would not have been doomed to destruction." When those in charge saw that it was hopeless to expect that she would take the unpleasant task off their hands, they bound her and opened her veins; but, the blood flowing too slowly, her death was accelerated by the vapor of a

bath heated to the highest point. After life was extinct, they severed her head from her body and carried it to Poppæa, in order that she might see that the deed by which she was made Empress of Rome was surely accomplished.

The abject Senate, when they learned that the whole matter was thus concluded, decreed that offerings should be made at the temples, as a thanksgiving for the deliverance of the emperor from the dangers which had threatened him through the conspiracy of his wife. Tacitus declares that he records this circumstance "in order that all those who shall read the calamities of those times, as they are delivered by me or any other authors, may conclude, by anticipation, that as often as a banishment or a murder was perpetrated by the prince's orders, so often thanks were offered to the gods; and those acts which in former times were resorted to in order that prosperous occurrences might be distinguished, were now made the tokens of public disasters."

These were the days of the martyrs. During this reign, the burning bodies of Christians lighted the gardens of the malevolent tyrant, innocent women and tender girls were exposed to fierce beasts in the arena, and by their sufferings were made to contribute interest to a Roman holiday. These died for their faith. They died gladly, in the belief that their pains and faithfulness were to be rewarded with an unfading crown in a land beyond the skies. They cheered each other in the face of death, and they were comforted by those friends who were still at liberty with the promise of a meeting where no tyrant's hand could harm them. Octavia was not of this faith. It is probable that she knew nothing of the strange doctrines which were making converts among the Roman slaves. Yet there was no martyr more innocent than herself, none more worthy

of canonization. There was none whose purity and whose fidelity to the principles which were cherished by high souls could present a better claim for the victor's palm and the martyr's crown than her own. Octavia knew nothing of the Christian hope of immortality; her religious faith at the best could teach her no more than the vague surmise that possibly in some dreary under world the shades of mortals retained a melancholy consciousness. Yet a consistent justice at the present day cannot do other than place side by side the persecuted girl from the imperial palace and the Christian slave maiden whose blood dripped from the jaws of the beasts of the arena, and believe that whatever consolation eternal fate provided for the one was equally shared in by the other.

As we have said, the first woman to attract the affections of Nero, which were never turned toward Octavia, was Acte. She had probably been brought as a slave from Asia. How old she was when Nero first knew her it is impossible for us to conjecture, but it is likely that she was somewhat older than the youthful emperor; it frequently happens that a boy's first love is aroused by a woman his superior in age. Then, too, Acte was at this time a freedwoman. Liberty was often gained by female slaves by means of the charms of their persons; but this result was not likely to be secured before those charms were fully matured. So profound was Nero's passion for Acte that, had he not been with difficulty restrained, he would have divorced Octavia forthwith and married the Greek. He is said to have induced men of consular rank to swear that she was of royal descent. It is by no means impossible that such an assertion should be true; for the slave markets which supplied Rome were to a large extent recruited by kidnapped children, picked up wherever they might be found. It is remarkable that not a word

that is detrimental to the character of Acte is recorded in history. Indeed, we know but very little about her, though she has always been regarded with a sort of poetical approbation. There is no evidence of her having used her power with the emperor for the injury of an enemy. She seems to have been modest and unassuming, and it is certain that her love for Nero was sincere; for it not only outlasted his, but remained true to the latest hour of his life. When all others had forsaken the fallen prince whom they had fawned upon, it was Acte who tenderly cared for his remains.

Tacitus represents her as warning Nero from his early evil extravagances. She remained queen of his affections for four years,—the best four years of his reign,—and it is said that when he turned from her to Poppæa she sank into a profound melancholy. Upon all this has been founded the surmise that Acte was a Christian; but it is nothing more than conjecture. Whatever may have been the facts in regard to this, in the little glimpses we obtain of her presence in the awful tragedies of her age we catch the outline of one whom we are assured must have been a good woman—a woman innately pure, but forced into contact with vice by circumstances over which she had no control.

There are numerous examples from history to prove that in the dissolute reign of Nero feminine goodness was not a rarity; but there are no pictures of pure light-heartedness and gladsome simplicity such as were known in the older days. Everything was sombre; death was in the air; the only gayety was that found in the scenes of reckless profligacy. It was an age of extremes: on the one side, unrestrained profligacy; on the other, fear and sorrow occasioned by a tyrant's cruel caprice. It was an age in which all the experiences of life were intensified.

Human life of the period can only be pictured in high lights and deep shadows; everything must be shown in strong relief. The fortune of nearly all the good women of this time whose names we know was to suffer patiently and die heroically.

Like Acte, the noble matron Pomponia Græcina has been credited by tradition with having found consolation for the sorrows of the times in that new faith which was undermining old Rome, both literally in the catacombs and figuratively in the rapidity with which it was making converts; but we know not with certainty. It would be unjust to paganism and untrue to history to claim every instance of moral superiority for the modern faith. Still, Græcina was accused of yielding to foreign superstitions. This may have been owing to the peculiarities of her manner. She had been the close friend of that Julia, daughter of Drusus, whom Messalina had forced to kill herself. From this time on, for the space of forty years, Græcina wore nothing but mourning, and was never seen to smile. Sienkiewicz founds the plot of his Neronian novel on the idea that Græcina was a Christian; but there are no facts by which this supposition can be verified. When the charge of entertaining foreign superstitions was laid against her, she was, in accordance with the ancient law, consigned to the adjudication of her husband. Plautius assembled her kindred, and, in compliance with the institutions of early times, having in their presence made solemn inquisition into the character and conduct of his wife, adjudged her innocent. She survived to a great age and was always held in high estimation by the people, but she never recovered from her melancholy.

When the noble Thrasea had been condemned to death by Nero, the officer who brought the tidings found him walking in the portico of his house. He had already

opened his veins, and as he stretched out his arms the blood began to flow. Calling the quæstor to him, and sprinkling the blood upon the floor, he said: "Let us make a libation to Jove the Deliverer. Behold, young man, and may the gods avert the omen, but you are fallen upon such times that it may be useful to fortify your mind by examples of unflinching firmness." Arria, his wife, wished to share her husband's fate, but he bade her live for their daughter's sake.

There were many women who presented examples of the same unflinching firmness for the encouragement of their own sex. The mother of Thrasea's wife, whose name was also Arria, exhibited a strength of mind and a magnanimity of spirit equal to that of the noblest Romans in the best days of the Republic. Duruy recounts two episodes in the career of this noble woman which illustrate all we have claimed for her as one of the best of her sex.

"Arria's husband, Cæcina Pætus, and his son were affected with a serious malady; the son died. His mother took such measures respecting the funeral that the father knew nothing of it. Every time she entered his room she gave him news of the sufferer,—he had not slept badly, or perhaps he was recovering his appetite; and when she could no longer restrain her tears she went out for a moment, and then returned with dry eyes and a calm face, having left her grief behind her. At a later period, her husband, being concerned in the conspiracy of Scribonianus, was captured and taken to Rome. He was put on board a ship, and Arria begged the soldiers to allow her to go with him. 'You cannot refuse,' she said to them, 'to a man of consular rank a few slaves to wait on him and dress him; I alone will do him these services.' As they continued inexorable, she hired a fishing boat and followed across the Adriatic the vessel in which her husband

was conveyed. At Rome, she met the wife of Scribonianus, who attempted to speak to her. 'How can I listen to you,' she said to her, 'who have seen your husband killed in your arms, and who are still alive?' Foreseeing the condemnation of Pætus, she determined not to survive him. Thrasea, her son-in-law, begged her to give up this determination. 'Is it your wish, then,' he said to her, 'if I should be compelled to die, that your daughter should die with me?' 'If she shall have lived as long and as united a life with you as I with Pætus, it is my wish,' was the reply. Her family watched her carefully, to prevent her fatal design. 'You are wasting your time,' she said; 'you will make me die a more painful death, but it is not in your power to prevent me from dying.' Thereupon she dashed her head against the wall with such violence that she fell down as if dead. When she recovered her senses, she said to them: 'I have already warned you that I should find some means of death, however hard, if you denied me an easy one.' We cannot wonder that, to decide her hesitating husband, she struck herself a fatal blow with a poniard; then handed him the weapon, saying: 'Pætus, it gives no pain.' "

Pliny gives an account of an incident showing similar conjugal devotion and self-sacrificing courage. "I was sailing lately," says he, "on our Lake Larius, when an elderly friend pointed out to me a house, one of whose rooms projected above the waves. 'From that spot,' he said, 'a townswoman of ours threw herself out with her husband. The latter had long been ill, suffering from an incurable ulcer. When she was convinced that he could not recover from his disease, she exhorted him to kill himself, and became his companion in death—nay, rather his example and leader, for she tied her husband to her and jumped into the lake.' " This was a woman of the

common citizens; we do not even know her name. Modern times have no examples to show of a closer marital sympathy than this. Our ideas compel us to deprecate the act of self-destruction; but we cannot question, or more than rival, such devotion. The like degree of faithfulness between married couples was common among the Romans; and this was their manner of showing it.

We have, more than once, seen the statement advanced in all seriousness by well-informed writers and public speakers that marital affection, in the modern understanding of the expression, was almost unknown among the ancients. The object of the contention is to enhance the appreciation of the effects of Christianity; but the argument is as absurdly inconsistent with history as it is with common sense. True, Christianity discourages conjugal unions in which that affection does not exist, but it does not create it; nor was there anything whatever in pagan customs or institutions to prevent the existence of the warmest and purest affection between husband and wife. The sole conditions in the ancient world that militated against pure and constant married love were the customary unions of expediency and the inferior position of the wife. As to the first of these customs, it is by no means unknown in the modern world and to Christian times; in regard to the second, the Roman wife in the period with which we are now engaged was almost equally as well off as her modern descendant.

Principles of virtue, honor, and duty of a high order had been inculcated through many generations of ancient Romans; and it could not be otherwise than that these would reappear and manifest themselves with invincible insistence, even in the most corrupt days of the Empire. What higher or more dignified sense of duty could there be than that exhibited by the lady who had determined to send

substantial relief to a friend of hers, banished by Domitian? It was represented to her that this money would be certain to fall into the tyrant's hands, and that hence she would be only wasting her means and gratifying the unworthy. "It is of little consequence to me," she said, "if Domitian steal it; but it is of great moment for me to send it." She possessed the sublime conviction that she was responsible to her consciousness of what friendship demanded, even though she might be certain of the miscarriage of her efforts.

There were also women whose spirits were stirred by the love of freedom, and who were willing to do and dare and suffer in the attempt to wrest the nation from a tyrant's grasp. Among those who have sacrificed their own lives at the altar of Liberty, the Roman woman can claim representatives.

We are told that into the conspiracy against Nero which was headed by Caius Piso, "senators, knights, soldiers, and even women entered with the ardor of competition." The plot was to attack Nero while he was singing upon the stage, though it was considered by some that it would be a better plan to set his house on fire and then despatch him while he was excitedly hurrying about unattended by his guards. "While the conspirators were hesitating, and protracting the issue of their hopes and fears, a woman named Epicharis—and how she became acquainted with the affair is involved in mystery, nor had she ever manifested a concern for worthy objects before—began to animate the conspirators, and goad them on by reproaches; but at length, disgusted by their dilatoriness, while sojourning in Campania, she tried every effort to shake the allegiance of the officers of the fleet at Misenum, and engage them in the plot."

But, though an enthusiastic conspirator, Epicharis proved herself an unwary recruiting agent. She especially applied

herself to an old acquaintance named Proculus, who confided to her the fact that he had been one of the party concerned in the assassination of the emperor's mother, and that he was dissatisfied with the reward he had received for such eminent service, he being only a minor officer in the fleet. He added that it was his settled purpose to be revenged, should a fitting opportunity present itself. Epicharis did not wait to consider the unwisdom of incontinently intrusting the knowledge of the whole plot to a man of insufficient principle to prevent him from looking upon the murder of a defenceless woman as an exploit to be liberally rewarded. Moreover, it is likely that she inadvertently had dropped some hint of what was in her mind, and Proculus lured her on by suggesting the possibility of himself as a convert. Epicharis first gave him the whole plot, and then set about persuading him to join it. She recounted all the atrocities of the emperor; and concluded with the remark "that Nero had stripped the Senate of all its powers; but," she added, "measures had been taken to punish him for overturning the constitution; and Proculus had only to address himself manfully to the work and bring over to their side the most energetic of the troops, and he might depend upon receiving suitable rewards."

One indiscretion she did not commit: she did not divulge the names of the conspirators. So, when Proculus laid information before the emperor—thinking doubtless that this was a readier path to reward than any plot of assassination of which a woman would be cognizant—his evidence was of little avail; but Nero considered it best to detain Epicharis in prison, in anticipation of anything that might occur.

The conspirators at last concluded to perpetrate their design at the Cirensian games. Lateranus, a man of

determined spirit and gigantic strength, was to approach the emperor as a suppliant and, apparently by accident, throw him down. Scævinus was to perform the principal part with a dagger he had procured from the temple of Fortune for the purpose. Piso was to wait at the temple of Ceres until he was summoned to the camp, which he was to enter attended by Antonia, the daughter of Claudius Cæsar,—a woman of an entirely opposite character to that of her grandmother, after whom she was named,—and who, it was hoped, would conciliate the favor of the people. How deeply Antonia was involved in this plot it is impossible to say. It appears improbable, as Tacitus remarks, that she should have lent her name and hazarded her life in a project from which she had nothing to hope.

It was through the dagger mentioned above, and also the cupidity of a woman, that the whole conspiracy came to light. Scævinus impatiently ordered his freedman Milichus to put the weapon to the grindstone and bring it to a sharp point. Milichus, putting together this and other preparations he witnessed, guessed the project that was on foot. He told his suspicions to the emperor. Scævinus was arrested; but his bearing was so confident that the accuser would have broken down had not the wife of Milichus reminded him that "Natalis had taken part in many secret conversations with Scævinus, and that both were confidants of Piso." Then followed numerous arrests, confessions, and accusations, each conspirator endeavoring to lighten the burden of his own guilt by revealing how many there were who shared it. Lucan the poet even informed against his own mother, Atilla.

Amid all this disaster, there was one spirit that remained undaunted, one tongue that could not be persuaded by promises or compelled by torment to confess and thus

implicate others. Epicharis had been held in custody from the time of her unguarded enthusiasm in Campania. Nero recollected her, and commanded that she should be put to the torture. "But," says the historian, "neither stripes, nor fire, nor the rage of the tormentors, who tore her with the more vehemence, lest they should be scorned by a woman, could vanquish her." Thus the first day of torture was passed without producing any effect upon her. "The day following, as she was being brought back to suffer the same torments, riding in a chair, for all her members being disjointed, she could not support herself, taking off the girdle that bound her breast, she tied it in a noose to the canopy of the chair, and, placing her neck in it, hung upon it with the weight of her whole body, and thus forced out the slender remains of life. A freedwoman, by thus screening strangers and persons almost unknown to her, though pressed to divulge their names by the most extreme torture, exhibited an example which derived augmented lustre from the fact that freeborn persons, men, Roman knights, and Senators, untouched by the instruments of inquisition, all betrayed their dearest pledges of affection."

Among the many who suffered from the discovery of this conspiracy was Seneca, the aged philosopher and the former tutor of Nero. It is probable that he was innocent; but he had incurred Nero's displeasure, and the tyrant was glad of the opportunity to destroy him with seeming justice. The parting of Seneca with his wife and her conduct at the time well merit the pains which the historian has taken with the recital. Embracing his wife, he implored her to "refrain from surrendering herself to endless grief; but to endeavor to mitigate her regret for her husband by means of those honorable consolations which she would experience in the contemplation of his

virtuous life." Paullina, however, expressed her determination to die with her husband, and called for the assistance of the executioner to open her veins. Seneca, proud of her devotion and as willing to see her acquire the glory of such an act as he was to be assured that she was safe from the hard usages of the world, replied: "I had pointed out to you how to soften the ills of life; but you prefer the renown of dying. I will not envy you the honor of the example. Though both display the same unflinching fortitude in encountering death, still the glory of your exit will be superior to mine." Then they had the veins of their arms opened at the same moment; but being unable to bear up under the excessive torture, and afraid lest the sight of his sufferings should overpower her, Seneca persuaded his wife to retire into another room.

When Nero heard what was being done, having no dislike to Paullina, and not willing to incur the odium of a double death and one so affecting, he ordered her wounds to be dressed and the flow of blood stanched. She survived but a few years, and these were devoted to the memory of her husband. It is also said that an excessive paleness was the continuous witness to the sacrifice to conjugal devotion which she had done her best to make.

Not so fortunate was Servilia, a young woman of twenty who, at this time, was arraigned before the Senate, charged with having distributed sums of money among the magi. Servilia was the daughter of Soranus, who had been Proconsul of Asia. There was no accusation against Servilia's father more severe than that he was a friend of Plautus, whom Nero, for reasons utterly unjust, but entirely satisfactory to himself, had caused to be executed. Tacitus suggests the picture of her trial: the consuls on the judgment seat in the presence of the assembled Senate; on one side of that tribunal, an old, gray-haired man who

for many years has served his country with honor and integrity; on the other side, the daughter, so young and yet widowed, for her husband has been sent into banishment, and hence is as dead to her. The thought that she, who had endeavored to aid and comfort her father, had only added to his dangers is so oppressive that she has not the heart to look at him. The accuser questions her: "Did you not sell your bridal ornaments, and even the chain off your neck, to raise money for the peformance of magic rites?" Instead of answering, the unfortunate girl falls to the floor, embracing the altar, as though hoping that divine aid would be given, where human mercy was not to be expected. At last she gathers voice, and is able to falter: "I have used no spells; nor did I seek aught by my unhappy prayers than that you, Cæsar, and you, fathers, would preserve this best of fathers unharmed. It was with this object alone I gave up my jewels, my raiment, and the ornaments belonging to my station; as I would have given up my blood and life, had the magi required them. To those men, till then unknown to me, it belongs to declare whose ministers they are, and what mysteries they use; the prince's name was never uttered by me, save as one speaks of the gods. Yet to all this proceeding of mine, if guilty it be, my most unhappy father is a stranger; and if it is a crime, I alone am the criminal."

Then Soranus pleads for his daughter. Her age is so tender that she could not have known Plautus, whose friend they accuse himself of being. Do they impeach him for mismanagement of his province? Let it be so; yet his daughter had not accompanied him to Asia. Her only crime was too much filial piety, too great solicitude for her father. He would gladly submit to whatever fate awaited him, if only they would separate her case from his. Overcome with emotion, the old man totters forward

with outstretched hands to embrace his daughter, who springs to meet him; but the stern lictors interpose the fasces and deny them this sad comfort.

The Senate exercises a heartless clemency; Servilia and Soranus are allowed to choose their own deaths. This faithful daughter, for seeking by means of her religion to aid her father, is privileged to die with him. With them also perished Thrasea, who had added to his crime of disbelieving in the deification of Poppæa that of neglecting to sacrifice for the preservation of Nero's beautiful voice!

A strikingly magnificent feature of the old Roman character is the manner in which these people met death. This was the one virtue which the Romans, down to the latest period of the decadence, did not cease to retain. In the most dissolute times, the Roman might live badly, but at least he could die bravely. This was the one opportunity always left when atonement might be made for the errors of life. In this ability to meet death with calm fortitude the women shared no less than the men. The maids and matrons of Rome were habituated by training and by their best traditional examples to look upon the possibility of exit from the world as an ever-ready refuge from unendurable ills. Lucretia was for Roman matrons an ideal in her death as well as in her life; and they seem to have found it less irksome to follow her in the former respect than in the latter.

In the endeavor to show how, even in the days of Nero, when wickedness reached its climax, virtue and honor and devotion were not utterly gone out of the world, it has been necessary to adopt as illustrations some of the saddest of the many tragedies of human history. Neither side of any true picture of this period can be a pleasing one. Human life in the city of Rome during the middle of the first century of our era was for the most part either insane or sad.

To exult in unrighteousness or mourn in bereavement was the lot of every prominent personage; for there were few quiet, honorable folk whom the hand of tyranny did not touch through their friends. Therefore, in the endeavor to show the better side of the life of this time, the necessity has been forced upon us to illustrate how the prevailing remnant of the ancient virtue was manifested in the devotion of women to their stricken husbands and friends, and in the firm manner in which they met their own death.

That which belongs to the ordinary routine of woman's life did not undergo any change during this period. The status of woman remained unaltered; her manners, customs, and occupations were the same. There was no progress. It was like the conditions existing in a home during a terrific electrical storm; all other interests are in abeyance until it is over.

This statement, however, applies more particularly to the city of Rome and to Italy. In the outlying parts of that country and in the provinces, the storm was hardly felt. Women who lived out of the sight of Nero and whose male friends did not hold office were secure from imperial cruelty and caprice. Their lives ran on in the ordinary manner of civilization. They were betrothed and married according to the ancient ceremonies; for customs changed slowly away from the metropolis. They worshipped the old gods, though they heard now and again of a certain sect of fanatical people who courted their own destruction from the officials, if not from Olympus, by denouncing the ancient worship. They managed their homes and their slaves, read their books, as we have seen in the case of Calpurnia, the wife of Pliny, and visited the amphitheatre. The only anxieties of the women who belonged to the unofficial class were those incidental to the rule of the proconsuls who were sent to govern them in

the name of the emperor. Sometimes these men were lustful; frequently they were tyrannical; they were always rapacious. The people were oppressed to meet the demands of the tax collectors; but these were ills that were always with them and represented a condition of affairs that was normal.

In his biography of his father-in-law, Agricola, who was himself a provincial, Tacitus says: "He married Domitia Decidiana, a lady of illustrious descent, from which connection he derived credit and support in his pursuit of greater things. They lived together in admirable harmony and mutual affection, each giving the preference to the other; "a conduct equally laudable in both, except that a greater degree of praise is due to a good wife, in proportion as a bad one deserves the greater censure." What more touching expression of family affection can there be found than the words Tacitus wrote in respect to Agricola's death? Apostrophizing him, he says: "But to myself and your daughter, besides the affliction of losing a parent, the aggravating affliction remains that it was not our lot to watch over your sickbed. With what attention should we have received your last instructions, and graven them on our hearts! This is our sorrow. Everything, doubtless, O best of parents, was administered for your comfort and honor, while a most affectionate wife sat beside you; yet fewer tears were shed upon your bier, and in the last light which your eyes beheld, something was wanting." There is nothing in modern times superior to this in chaste and cultivated sympathy.

Seneca also, who was born at Cordova, describes his mother as having been "brought up in a strict home"; and he assures us that his aunt, during the sixteen years that her husband governed Egypt, was "unknown in the province," so devoted was she to her family and home

duties. There was also Polla, the wife of Lucan, whose inconsolable grief at her husband's death was so beautifully described by Statius. We read also of Minicius Macrinus, who lived thirty-nine years with his consort without a single cloud ever rising between them; while Martial tells us of Spurinna, a man of consular family loaded with years and honors, who lived in the country with his aged wife, each resting in the other's affection, and finishing together "the evening of a fair life."

Chapter XII

Under the Flavians

XII

UNDER THE FLAVIANS

SUCH sober-minded people as had survived the reign of Nero hailed the tyrant's death as a deliverance, though they had no guaranty of the inauguration of a better state of things. No conceivable change could be otherwise than for the better. At first sight, it seems marvellous that the better class of Romans endured so long and with such supineness a shameful monstrosity like the government of Nero; but it must be remembered that no government is other than the majority of the people desire, or better than they deserve. The mass of the people in the capital were satisfied to have an imperial mountebank ruling over them. Politics had ceased to interest them, they having wholly forfeited their liberties. They cared naught for the fortunes of the Empire, so long as the wheat ships came regularly from Alexandria. The only vestige of independence they retained was the privilege of shouting with impatience when the games were delayed; there were no further rights they cared to demand when Nero, dining in his box at the amphitheatre, threw his napkin from behind the curtains as a signal that he had finished and that the sport might commence. With such a populace as this, the nobler spirits in the city could hope to accomplish nothing. Their only recourse was to

glorify their passive sufferings and their death with stoical calmness and undismayed pride. How hopeless it was to expect the inauguration of a revolt among the common people of Rome is shown by the attitude of these people toward Nero's memory after his death. For a long time, his tomb was continually decked with flowers. Sometimes, his admirers placed his image upon the rostra, dressed in robes of state; again, they would publish proclamations in his name, as though he were yet alive and would shortly return and avenge himself upon his enemies. Occasionally, there were rumors of his reappearance, for the reality of his death was doubted in many quarters, and the undisguised satisfaction with which these reports were received is evidence that the Roman people generally were not yearning for reform.

But those who were absent in the provinces, being neither under the immediate power of Nero nor partners in his excesses, did not endure with such complacence the shame he put upon the Roman name. Men like Galba and Vespasian heard with great indignation from scoffing foreigners how, at Rome, they had seen the emperor acting Orestes or even Canace on the stage. These men could not endure the thought of serving under a ruler who competed with a slaveborn pantomimist. Revolt flamed up among the legions in various parts of the Empire; the guards at Rome joined in it; and when Galba came, who had been proclaimed emperor, they gladly welcomed him.

Rome was shaken in the very foundations of her constitutional ideals. The discovery of the possibility that an emperor could be created away from the city marked the entering of the wedge which was eventually to bring about the disintegration of the Empire. The legions had come clearly to realize that the gift of the Empire was in their hands. The Senate was henceforth supernumerary.

The city was no longer to be viewed with that superstitious reverence which had made men deem nothing sacred or authoritative that had not issued therefrom; it was the centre, but no longer the source of Empire. It soon came to pass that "Roman" signified wide-spreading national inclusion rather than, as heretofore, racial exclusion; even a Jew might now claim to be a freeborn Roman citizen, though he had never seen the Capitol.

In consequence of opposing claims to the succession, Italy was once more torn with civil strife, an experience from which she had been free ever since the days of the last Triumvirate. Within eighteen months three emperors were created and destroyed.

Our story, however, does not deal with emperors or with the political history of Rome, except as it is necessary to refer to it as a background for, or an explanation of, the conduct of the women who are herein introduced. Women played no important part in the disturbances which shook the Empire after the death of Nero, and which thus differed from many of the previous revolutions in the State; yet it is entirely consistent with the plan of this work to mention the women who were connected with the principal actors.

Galba, who was an old man when he came to the throne, had been in his youth a great favorite of the Empress Livia. By her he had been advanced in fortune and position. His mother's name was Mummia Achaica, the daughter of Catulus; but she probably died when he was very young, and he owed the benefits of his training to Ocellina, his stepmother, who was a very remarkable woman in more than one respect. Beautiful and very wealthy, she herself made the advances in courtship to Galba's father. The elder Galba became consul and was of considerable importance in the State; but he was a very

short man and deformed. There is an interesting story to the effect that once, when Ocellina was pressing her suit, Galba, in order that if there were to be any disillusionment on her part in regard to himself it might take place before he gave her his hand, took off in her presence the *toga* which hid the deformity of his back. The incident shows a praiseworthy ingenuousness of disposition on the part of Galba; it also indicates, what is of more interest to us, the fact that Roman ladies were not unaccustomed to making matrimonial advances in person and with unmistakable directness of purpose. Galba, the future emperor, was adopted by Ocellina as her own son; and it is safe to assume that the honesty of his character was in a large degree the result of her training as well as an inheritance from his father.

Galba was married to Æmilia Lepida, a descendant of the triumvir; but she died during the reign of Claudius, and he never afterward married, even though he was ardently sought by Agrippina the Younger, who had been cuffed by his mother-in-law for seeking to usurp the place of Lepida while the latter still lived.

During the short eight months of his reign, Galba was almost entirely ruled by the influence of Titus Vinius and Piso Licinianus, both of whom perished with him, the latter having been designated by him as his successor. Vinius met a fate which he richly deserved, and which, unfortunately for many Romans, he escaped, though barely, in the days of Caligula. At that time, he disgraced himself as the accomplice and paramour of Cornelia, the wife of his commander, Sabinus, she who paraded the camp at night in the dress of a common soldier. Cornelia, however, expiated her crime by her devotion to her husband in his misfortune at a later day. Vinius attained to fortune by means of methods which are well illustrated by the indignity to

which he submitted his daughter Crispina at the hands of the depraved Tigellinus. During Galba's reign, the people, believing Nero to have been incited to his worst acts by Tigellinus, demanded the latter's execution. Vinius preserved him from their rage, and thereupon Tigellinus gave a splendid banquet as a thanksgiving for his deliverance. This entertainment Crispina attended, accompanied by her father, who allowed her to receive from their host an immense sum of money. Tigellinus on the same occasion commanded his chief concubine to take from her own neck an extremely valuable necklace and place it upon that of Crispina. But she was soon compelled to expend her ill-gotten gains in a most pitiable manner. After the death of Galba, Piso, and Vinius, the soldiers amused themselves by carrying their heads about the city on the points of spears. When Crispina and Verania, the wife of Piso, visited the camp for the purpose of imploring the heads of their relatives, in order that they might be disposed of with funereal honor, Crispina was not allowed to take that of her father until she had purchased it at a cost of twenty-five thousand drachmas.

Otho, who had been the husband of Poppæa Sabina, was the next emperor; but his reign lasted less than four months, and his only praiseworthy act is the noble manner in which he died. Then came the brief and shameful reign of Vitellius. Rome needed only to come under the rule of a glutton to have exhibited by turn upon her throne a monstrous example of every form of vice to which human nature can become addicted.

This man was the son of that Vitellius who had so shamelessly flattered Messalina and so basely deserted her in her extremity of need. His mother's name was Sextilia, and she is reported to have been a most excellent and respectable woman, whose character was formed on

the model of the ancient morals. Her death is said to have been brought about by her son, in order that the prediction of a German prophetess might be certain of fulfilment, she having told him that he would reign in security, if he survived his mother. He is accused of having denied her proper nourishment during her illness. Suetonius, however, adds, "that being quite weary of the woeful state of affairs, and apprehensive of the future, she obtained without difficulty a dose of poison from her son."

Petronia was the first wife of Vitellius. A separation took place which was probably mutually agreed upon, for Petronia bequeathed her property to their son; first requiring, however, that he be released from his father's authority. Vitellius agreed to this; but shortly after, the son died by poison believed to have been administered by his father. A woman named Galeria Fundano became the second wife of Vitellius; but of her nothing more is known than that Tacitus speaks of her gentle disposition.

With Vitellius, to reign meant merely to feast royally. In this, however, he was only the leading and most noteworthy exponent of a vice characteristic of his time. Gluttony, among the Romans, had come to be exalted to an art; and, in proof that the women of those days were not exempt from it, historians inform us that it was common for individuals of the female sex to be afflicted with the gout. Suetonius thus describes the kind of feasting to which Vitellius accustomed the nobility of Rome: "At a supper given him by his brother, on the day of his arrival in Rome, there were served two thousand rare fishes and seven thousand birds. But Vitellius threw into the shade all this profusion by using on his own table a huge dish, which he named the Shield of Minerva. In it were livers of plaice, brains of pheasants and peacocks, flamingoes' tongues, roe of lamprey, and a thousand other things

which the ships of war had sought from the remotest border of the Euxine to the Pillars of Hercules."

This dish of Vitellius was made of silver. What its exact weight was we do not know; but inasmuch as a freedman of Claudius had constructed one of five hundred pounds weight, which was evidently inferior, we can well believe the ancient writer when he tells us that the Shield of Minerva was of such prodigious size that a special furnace had to be constructed for its manufacture. It was kept as a monument of extravagance until the time of Hadrian, who caused it to be melted.

The brief reign of Vitellius was closed in a paroxysm of civil strife, which ended within the walls of the city itself. For more than a hundred years,—ever since the sack of Perusia, in which Fulvia played so prominent a part,—the women of Italy had been free from the bitter experiences of war. They knew nothing of the cruelties and atrocities which followed in the wake of ancient battle, except from stories told by grandmothers at nightfall. Now they were to suffer those evils themselves.

In warfare, more than in any other experience, man reverts to his original barbarous, or rather purely animal, type. It is noticeable also that in war, and especially in civil war, women regain some of that ferocity which characterizes the female of the lower types of animals. In the reign of terror during the French Revolution, there were many women who showed themselves as bloodthirsty as any of the men who composed the Committee of Public Safety. So, in the struggles which accompanied the short-lived reigns of these three Roman emperors there were many women who engaged in the battles; and there were some who distinguished themselves by conduct not often exhibited to the discredit of the female sex. Triaria, for example, who was the wife of Lucius Vitellius, the

brother of the emperor, is described as having been a woman of the most furious spirit. When Dolabella, who had married Petronia, was in danger of his life, Triaria warned a friend who sought to save him that it would not be good for that friend to seek the exercise of clemency; and when Tarracina was sacked by the Vitellian soldiers, this same Triaria, armed with the sword of a soldier, urged on the men to murder and rapine.

In the final strife between the forces of Vitellius and Vespasian, the city of Cremona, which was held by the former, was besieged. Tacitus informs us that, in their zeal for the cause which their city had adopted, some of the women of Cremona took part on the field of battle and were slain. In view of what followed at the taking of their city, they were fortunate in their lot. "Forty thousand men," says the historian, "poured into it. The number of drudges and camp followers was still larger, and more addicted to lust and cruelty. Neither age nor dignity served as a protection; deeds of lust were perpetrated amidst scenes of carnage, and murder was added to rape. Aged women who had passed their prime, and who were useless as booty, were made the objects of brutal sport. Maidens were contended for by ruffians who ended by turning their swords against each other."

The bloodshed and rapine were carried into the city of Rome itself. When he saw that his case was hopeless, the ignoble, indolent Vitellius wished to abdicate; but this neither his soldiers nor the people would allow him to do. Flavius Sabinus was prefect of the city, and he, with the soldiers of the Vespasian party, took refuge in the Capitol. There were women who voluntarily took their places with these besieged men. Among them was Verulana Gratilla, who, having neither children nor relatives, followed the fortunes of the war for no other apparent reason than

the pleasure she derived from scenes of carnage. In this conflict the Capitol was fired and the temple of the Empire reduced to ashes. Yet, while all these things were occurring, the common people of Rome, indifferent as to whether they were ruled by Vitellius or Vespasian, looked on as if they were at a gladiatorial show. It was to them nothing more than a spectacle, except that it was also an occasion for absolute lawlessness and an incitement to frenzied indulgence in everything vicious. So brutalized were the people that, while in some parts of the great city the streets were filled with heaps of slain, in other parts, to which the conflict did not extend, there prevailed revelry of the most frantic kind, in which shameless women took a leading part.

The legions of Vespasian conquered; and with his enthronement Rome returned to peace and sanity. The enormities in which she had indulged since the reign of Augustus were for the time expiated.

In the Flavians, a new and healthy dynasty came to the throne of the Cæsars, though not later than the third reign, that of Domitian, it also was to succumb to the effects of the possession of unbounded power. Vespasian had come from an obscure family living at Reate in the Sabine country. His father had collected the revenue in the province of Asia, where his statue had been erected with the inscription: *The Honest Tax Collector*. His mother, whose name was Vespasia Polla, was descended from a good Umbrian family. Tertulla, his grandmother by his father's side, had charge of his education, and her memory was always held by him in the highest regard; much more than appears is suggested in the remark of Suetonius that, after his advancement to the Empire, Vespasian loved to visit the place where he spent his childhood. The house and all the surroundings were kept exactly in the same

condition, so that amid unchanged scenes he might live over again his boyhood days. It was a simple country house, with no pretension to the splendor in which the great mansions of the city vied with each other; yet it was artistic.

In those times, not even the simplest farmstead was without its statuary; and we may well believe that, as Tertulla, in the courts of Phalacrine, superintended the education of the future builder of the Colosseum, she could point to examples of sculptured beauty to illustrate those ideas of art which were included in every Roman's training. In the great common room, where the work of the house was done, and where, on winter evenings, the slaves were kept busy with useful occupations, Polla presided, as had the matrons of the old days. In the atrium she entertained her rural neighbors in simple style; and there also she sometimes lectured her son, who greatly displeased her by his tardiness in putting off his boyish ways. She was ambitious for him, and longed to hurry him away to Rome, that in the stir of the city or the camp he might win renown for the Vespasian name. Polla little understood that the time her son spent, idly, as she supposed, watching the teams and cattle about the drinking troughs of the inner court, was fortifying him to withstand the moral dangers of a court of another sort. The rugged, straightforward, simple-mannered soldier, who honored festival occasions by drinking from a silver cup which he treasured as a keepsake from his grandmother, was such an emperor as the Romans had not before seen the like of.

Flavia Domitilla was the wife of Vespasian; but she did not survive to participate with him in the imperial dignity. Of her life and character we know little. There is in existence but one likeness of her—a colossal head found

near Puteoli and now preserved in the Campana Museum. This gives her the appearance of a strikingly handsome woman, with a suggestion of pride, but not too powerful to overcome the aspect of good nature. Suetonius says that she was at first the mistress of Statilius Capella, a Roman knight. It may seem strange that a man of Vespasian's character should marry a woman who had sustained such a former relation; but in those times, wives with a past history in which their present husbands had played no part were not so rare that they were even remarkable. Domitilla enjoyed by birth all the legal privileges of a Latin woman, but she was not a citizen of Rome until a suit had been brought by her father for her in the courts. Possibly this suit was instituted in regard to her inheritance of property; for the privileges of citizenship, as they related to women, consisted of the ability to receive legacies and bequeath property, and to form such matrimonial unions as would be held valid when brought into question in matters concerning property. It is very likely that the explanation of the fact that Domitilla is spoken of as the mistress rather than the wife of Statilius is to be found in the further fact that, he being a Roman knight and she not yet a citizen of Rome, legal marriage could not take place between the two. Suetonius tells us that after the death of Domitilla, Vespasian renewed his union with his former concubine Cænis, the freedwoman and former amanuensis of Antonia, whom he treated, even after he became emperor, almost as if she had been his legal wife; and it is safe for us to suppose that, had he been legally able to do so, Vespasian would have made Cænis Empress of Rome.

Domitilla bore her husband three children: Titus and Domitian, who became emperors in succession, and Domitilla, who died before her father attained to the purple.

The salutary influence of Vespasian's character was soon made apparent in the improvement of Roman morals. He was not an energetic reformer; but he curtailed those abuses which were most flagrant, and himself set an example which those who desired his favor found it to their advantage to follow. He expelled from the Senate those who were extraordinarily vicious in their lives, and among them one who had, by request of Nero, contended with a Greek girl in the arena. He required the Senate to pass a decree that any woman who entered into a liaison with the slave of another person should be herself considered a slave—a law which indicates to what lengths the license of women had carried them during the preceding reigns.

One act of cruelty to a woman stains the records of this reign. An insurrection had been stamped out in Belgium; but Sabinus, the leader, had made his escape. His house was burned; still he could easily have escaped into Germany, but that he was unwilling to leave his young wife, Eponia, unprotected as well as homeless. "He concealed himself in an underground hiding place, whose entrance was known only to two faithful freedmen. He was believed to be dead; and his wife, sharing the opinion of those around her, had been for three days plunged in inconsolable affliction. Being secretly informed, however, that Sabinus was alive, she concealed her delight, and was conducted to his place of refuge, where in the end she determined also to remain. After seven months, the husband and wife ventured to emerge, and made a journey to Rome for the purpose of soliciting pardon. But being warned in season that the petition would be in vain, they left Rome without seeing the emperor, and again sheltered themselves in their subterranean refuge. Here they lived together during nine years. Being at last discovered, Sabinus was taken to Rome, where Vespasian ordered his

execution. Eponia had followed her husband, and she threw herself at the emperor's feet. 'Cæsar,' she cried, showing her two sons, who were with her, 'these have I brought forth and nourished in the tombs, that two more suppliants might implore thy clemency.' Those present were moved to tears, and even Vespasian himself was affected; but he remained inflexible. Eponia then asked to die with him whom she had been unable to save. 'I have been more happy with him,' she said, 'in darkness and under ground, than thou in supreme power.' Her second request was granted her. Plutarch met at Delphi one of their children, who related to him this sad and touching story." Why this usually tolerant and always sensible emperor should have been so inexorable on this occasion is a mystery.

There is another instance recorded, in which a woman of different character, presenting a petition of another kind, received an acquiescent response. A lady of rank pretending, as Suetonius puts it, to be desperately enamored of Vespasian,—it must have been that she hoped to achieve a permanent relationship with the widowed emperor,—requested that which it would have been more consistent with her modesty to have avoided. In addition to granting her petition, Vespasian made her a present of four hundred thousand sesterces. When his steward asked how he would have the sum entered in his accounts, he replied: "For Vespasian's being seduced." Considering, however, the parsimonious character which the historian attributes to this emperor, we are more inclined to think that the sum must have been entered on the credit side of the ledger.

Vespasian died in A. D. 79. The humor—which is the same thing as saying the sanity—of the man is manifested in his remark, as he felt his life ebbing away: "Well,

I suppose I shall soon be a god." Pliny says of him: "Greatness and majesty produced in him no other effect than to render his power of doing good equal to his desire." Suetonius declares: "By him the State was strengthened and adorned."

In this same year occurred the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum. These two cities, by the manner in which they were by one event both destroyed and preserved, have afforded us so much material for the study of Roman home life that a reference to them is entirely in accord with the plan of this book. Among the Romans, even more so than among ourselves, woman's life was home life. As we look into those Pompeian houses, which the catastrophe of a day rendered impregnable to the siege of centuries, we see in reality before us much which the scraps of information afforded by the ancient writers fail to make intelligible. By a singular good fortune, we are in possession of the narrative furnished by a trustworthy eyewitness of the disaster which overwhelmed Pompeii; it is contained in the two letters which Pliny the Younger wrote to Tacitus, informing him how Pliny and his mother watched the eruption of Vesuvius while his uncle was perishing in the attempt to rescue the wife of a friend and at the same time to satisfy his spirit of inquiry. We will not recite the well-known account, except as it refers to the women who, if for no other reason than that it was their fate or fortune to be present on this memorable occasion, deserve a mention in the history of Roman women. Pliny says: "On the twenty-fourth of August, about one in the afternoon, my uncle was desired by my mother to observe a cloud which appeared of a very unusual size and shape. . . . This extraordinary phenomenon excited his philosophical curiosity to take a nearer view of it. He ordered a light vessel to be got ready, and gave me the

liberty, if I thought proper, to attend him. I preferred to continue my studies. . . . As he was coming out of the house, he received a note from Rectina, the wife of Bassus, who was in the utmost alarm at the imminent danger which threatened her; for her villa being situated at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, there was no way to escape but by sea; she earnestly entreated him, therefore, to come to her assistance. He accordingly changed his first design, and what he began with a philosophical turn of mind he pursued with heroic purpose. He ordered the galleys to put to sea and himself went on board, with an intention of assisting not only Rectina, but several others, for villas stand extremely thick upon that beautiful coast." In this design he was unsuccessful; so he went to what is now called Castellamare, in the Gulf of Naples. While there he was suffocated by the poisonous gases which accompanied the eruption. In a second letter, Pliny describes his mother and himself seeking to escape from the effects of a "black and dreadful cloud, bursting with an igneous, serpentine vapor, darting out a long train of fire, resembling flashes of lightning, but much larger. . . . Soon the cloud seemed to descend, and cover the whole ocean, as indeed it entirely hid the island of Capreæ and the promontory of Misenum. My mother strongly conjured me to make my escape, at any rate, which, as I was young, I might easily do; as for herself, she said, her age and corpulency rendered all attempts of that sort impossible. However, she would willingly meet death, if she could have the satisfaction of seeing that she was not the occasion of mine. But I absolutely refused to leave her, and taking her by the hand I led her on, she complying with great reluctance, and with many reproaches to herself for retarding my flight. . . . Darkness overspread us, not like that of a cloudy night, or when there is no moon, but

of a room when it is shut up and all the lights are extinct. Nothing was then to be heard but the shrieks of women, the screams of children, and the cries of men. Some calling for their children, others for their parents, others for their husbands, and only distinguishing each other by their voices; one lamenting his own fate, another that of his family; some wishing to die from the very fear of dying; some lifting their hands to the gods; but the greater part imagining that the last and eternal night was come, which was to destroy the gods and the world together. . . . Heavy showers of ashes rained upon us, which we were obliged every now and then to shake off, otherwise we should have been crushed and buried in the heap." The mother and the son escaped, however, and returned to Misenum, where in the midst of still threatening danger they awaited news of the intrepid and fated naturalist.

Two-fifths of the city of Pompeii have now been cleared, and we can see the external conditions of the Roman woman's life as it would have been impossible for modern times to conceive them had it not been for that ancient catastrophe. We can see the streets as they were in the days of Agrippina; we can look into the shops where the women of ancient Italy sought bargains across the marble counters; we can go to the temples where they worshipped, to the theatre where they were thrilled and amused; indeed, we have a theatre ticket, with the number of the seat and the name of the play. Best of all, we can enter houses almost intact, and examine the environments of that home life which in all ages is the special domain of woman. No account of woman can be made complete without a study of her home, and for this reason we quote freely from M. Boissier's fine description of the Pompeian residence. "The principal rooms are all on the ground floor. The richest inhabitants build themselves houses

A POMPEIAN HOUSE

From a water-color by M. Hoffbauer, after a restoration by Jules Bouchot from Pliny's description

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This interior, called the house of Pansa, is surrounded by three streets and an alley. The view is from the vestibule. In the centre is a basin, formed to receive water which fell from the roof through an opening which also gave light to the rooms, the doors and portières of which are seen on each side. Near to the basin was the altar for the household god; the space beyond this was the dining room, which led to the peristyle, reception room, and garden. As in the atrium, rooms opened into the peristyle and other parts.

The ground-floor exteriors were usually rented for shops. Trade by the Roman nobility was always considered degrading, especially if not extensive, says Cicero; they therefore traded by making their slaves or freedmen the ostensible merchants.

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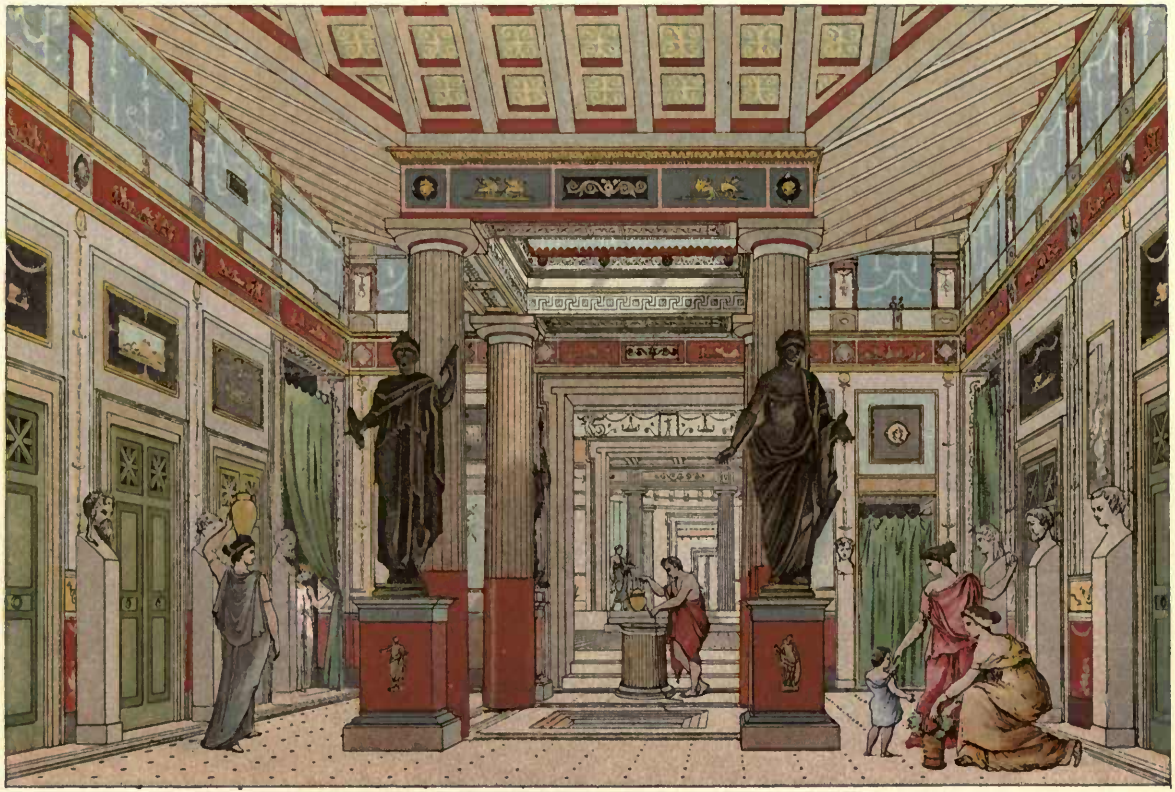

situated on four streets, thus occupying the whole block. If they were economical, they cut off from this large plot of ground some strips, which they let for a good sum; and we sometimes find shops occupying the whole exterior of the house. While with us the front is reserved for the best rooms, in Pompeii it was given up to business purposes, or else closed with thick walls, in which there were no openings. The whole house, instead of looking toward the street, faces the interior. It communicates with the outer world only by the entrance door, kept strictly closed and guarded; there are few windows, and these only in the upper stories. Families wished to live in private, far from the indifferent and from strangers. . . . The head of the house did not desire to look into the street, and he was specially averse to having persons in the street look into his house. Even within the mansion he had divisions and distinctions. The part into which he welcomed his visitors was not that to which he retired with his family; and it was not easy to penetrate into this sanctuary, separated from every other part by corridors, closed by doors or hangings, and guarded by porters. The owner received when he wished, he remained in seclusion when so inclined; and in case any client, more troublesome and obstinate than usual, lingered in the vestibule to meet him on his way out, he had a back door on a narrow street, which permitted him to escape. . . .

"If the rooms are not large, they are numerous. The Roman used his residence as he did his slaves; he had different rooms for each event of the day, as he had servants for every necessity of life. Each room in his house is made precisely for the use to which it is destined. He is not satisfied, as we are, with a single dining room; he has them of various sizes, and he uses one or another at different seasons of the year, or according to the number of

friends whom he wishes to entertain. The chamber where he takes his siesta during the day and that to which he retires to sleep at night are very small, admitting light and air only through the door, which is not a disadvantage in the South, where coolness is promoted by darkness. Besides, he is there only while he is asleep; for the rest he has his *atrium* and his *peristylium*.

"Here he prefers to stay when he is at home. He is here not only with his wife and children, but under the eyes of his servants, and sometimes in their society. In spite of his fancy for seclusion and isolation, of which I have spoken, he does not shun their company; for the family of antiquity is more extensive than ours. It embraces, while recognizing their inferiority, the slave and the freedman; so that the master, in living with them, feels himself among his own people. These open and closed *atria*, where the family spends its time, are found in all Pompeian houses without exception; they are indispensable to furnish light for the rest of the dwelling. Consequently, all persons, even the poorer classes, took pleasure in ornamenting them tastefully, and sometimes with profusion. If the extent of ground permitted it, various shrubs were planted, and a few flowers were made to grow."

Rome had for its next emperor Titus, who, in the two years of his reign, showed himself the best and wisest ruler Rome had ever known. "I have lost a day," he said, when at evening he could not remember having afforded anyone assistance. He inherited his father's good sense, he had profited by the elder's experience, and he came to the throne after having tasted and become satiated with the vices common to his age. He first married Arricidia, the daughter of a knight. Of her we know nothing further. After her death, he took to wife Marcia Furnilla, a woman of very noble family, but probably of ignoble

mind, for he divorced her, and retained the custody of their daughter. This was a Julia, who was true to the character common to the imperial women of that name. We shall have occasion to discuss her a little later.

The woman with whose history the name of Titus was chiefly connected and who exerted more influence upon his life than any other was Berenice, the daughter of Agrippa the Great. She was a Jewess by race, but Roman in sympathy as well as by allegiance; and for character she may well be classed with such Roman ladies as Poppæa or Julia the daughter of Augustus. She was first married to Herod of Chalcis; but he died, and for a long while she remained a widow in the company and under the protection of her brother Agrippa. During this time, the pair paid a visit to Rome, and while on the way stopped at Cæsarea, where Festus was governor. Here Berenice listened to the Apostle Paul, as he made his eloquent plea in answer to his accusers and appealed to the tribunal of Cæsar. Berenice's continued widowhood, joined with the known laxity of her morals, caused ugly stories to be set afloat regarding her relations with her brother; whereupon she induced Polemon, King of Cilicia, to become a proselyte to Judaism and marry her. This marriage seems to have been unsatisfactory to both parties, for Berenice soon returned to Jerusalem, and Polemon recanted from his Jewish faith. At this time, Titus was with his father in Judea, and, though Berenice was much older than he, the young Roman was fascinated by her extraordinary beauty, so much so that he took her with him on his return to Rome. She was given apartments in the palace, and there, to all appearance, she lived with Titus as his wife. In fact, he would have made her his wife indeed, had it not been for the strong prejudices of the Romans against foreign alliances; but when he succeeded to the throne,

rather than that his rule should be impaired by any scandal, he sent Berenice away, though the separation was the source of poignant grief to them both.

Titus died twenty-six months after he came to the throne, and his brother Domitian—who, unfortunately for the history of Rome, possessed a healthier constitution as well as an inferior disposition—reigned in his stead. Domitian has been called the second Nero, the character of his reign being very similar to that of Nero's rule. This unworthy son of Vespasian had disgraced his youth by vicious extravagances of all kinds; but, on coming to the throne, he seemed to have reformed. This, however, was only temporary. As has been remarked, on the day of coronation there are few bad monarchs. All begin well; but the majority of despots end badly.

Domitian even began his reign as a reformer. He constituted himself censor. In this capacity his attention was turned first to the college of Vestal Virgins, who had so far forgotten the character which was the prime essential to their office that they had become notorious for the licentiousness of their conduct. Three of these priestesses received an order to make away with themselves. Cornelia, the chief Vestal and the worst offender, was condemned to suffer the prescribed punishment of entombment. In the story of her death there is an incident worthy of note as illustrating the effrontery which may be developed in a woman by a habitual though unwarranted assumption of superior holiness. As she was descending to the tomb, Cornelia's veil caught on the steps; when an official offered to disentangle it, the Vestal in a horrified manner bade him desist, as her consecrated character could not endure the profane touch of a man.

Domitian, moreover, passed an edict prohibiting to prostitutes the use of the *lectica,* or travelling chair; they also

lost the right of receiving legacies or inheriting estates. But this enthusiasm for morality was short-lived, and his censorship never interfered with his own indulgences or extended to his own family. The empress of that day was Domitia Longina, who seems to have been a woman who would find the extravagances of Nero's libidinous entertainments entirely consistent with her character and tastes. She fell desperately in love with Paris, the famous actor of the time. In consequence she was divorced; but her husband, unable to endure the separation, recalled her on the pretence that it was demanded by the people. Her influence over the emperor is perhaps further indicated by the fact that we hear of nothing sinister having happened to Paris; but the Senator Helvidius, who, under the character of Œnone, held Domitia up to scorn in a farce which he wrote, was put to death. There is in existence a bust of Domitia Longina, but the sole reflection which her appearance suggests is the amount of labor and care which must have been demanded of her slaves in the production of the innumerable tiny curls in which her hair is arranged.

During the lifetime of Titus, his daughter Julia was offered to Domitian in marriage, the example of Agrippina and Claudius having established the legality of a union between an uncle and a niece. But at this time Domitia ruled the heart of the future emperor. Afterward, the unhappy Julia was induced to enter into a criminal intercourse with Domitian, and lost her life in an attempt to destroy its proof. This was a danger which was frequently incurred by married women, in order to prevent the birth of legitimate offspring. Large families in wealthy houses were exceedingly rare. In the Museum of the Vatican there is a statue of Julia, represented as the goddess Clemency. There is also in existence a profile engraved upon stone, as well as a bust which is preserved in

the Uffizi Gallery. It requires but a glance at these likenesses to enable one to understand why the Greeks called Julia "The New Juno."

During the reign of Domitian, the Colosseum, the building of which had been commenced by Vespasian, was completed and opened. In this immense amphitheatre there were seats for eighty-seven thousand spectators, and fifteen thousand more were able to find standing room. In its arena, during each year, hundreds of men—gladiators, criminals, and Christians—fought and fell in mortal agony for the amusement of those great audiences, of which women formed a goodly proportion. There sat the empress in a front box which was especially designed for the Vestals; and it frequently happened that the scene upon which the eyes of those ladies rested was the mangling of the bodies of Christian women by the claws and teeth of ferocious beasts.

Women also voluntarily took their places in the arena. Races in the *stadium* between young girls were frequent, nor was it a thing entirely unknown for women to engage in the deadly sport of the gladiators. Sometimes they faced the wild animals; and at times they even took the trident and the net of the *retiarii* and tried their skill against the swordsmen. Juvenal has his fling at Mævia, who, "with breast exposed, grasps the hunting spear and transfixes the Tuscan boar." The satirist also exercises his grim humor on the picture of a woman practising the art of fencing. "Who has not beheld the wounds of the wooden post, which she dints with courageous foil, and attacks with her shield, and goes against with skilful precision? A matron most preëminently worthy to dance to the trumpet at the indecent Floral games. Perhaps, however, she is meditating a more serious purpose, and intends to engage in real earnest at the amphitheatre, for

hire. What modesty can a woman show that wears a helmet, eschews her sex, and delights in feats of strength?"

It would have been a marvel if Domitian had been allowed to end his life otherwise than by violent means. Suetonius accuses Domitia of being privy to her husband's assassination, but does not explain in what way she took part in it. Suetonius had a rare nose for scandal, and always believed the worst. The emperor was killed by a freedman, a steward of Domitilla.

> "When he dreadful to the rabble grew,
> Him, who so many lords had slain, they slew."

Again in the death of this tyrant we see how the woman love for an innocent babe will survive every vice of the grown man. There was in the palace a woman named Phyllis, who had been Domitian's nurse. She was the only one who showed any respect for the dead emperor. First, she had his body interred at his villa in the Latin Way; then, when she found a safe opportunity, she burned the remains and, carrying the ashes to the mausoleum of the Flavian family, mingled them with those of Julia, whose nurse she had also been.

The Empress Domitia seems to have survived her husband many years; for an inscription, the date of which corresponds with the year 140, mentions that one of her freedmen, after building a temple to her, offers the *decuriones* of Gabii fifteen thousand sesterces, the income of which was to be spent in keeping the building in repair and in celebrating the birthday of his mistress.

The period of Roman history which we have traversed in our study of woman shows the ancient pagan Empire at its best materially and at its worst morally. We are about to enter upon a new epoch. We shall speedily begin to notice premonitions of decline, but we shall not again

witness such an absolute and all-prevalent abandonment of the requirements of morality. From the days of Cæsar Augustus down to the end of the reign of Domitian, all that is recorded of Roman women, with a few noble exceptions, is little more than a wearisome repetition of instances of astonishing sensuality. Why was it that the women of this period indulged to such an unnatural and unrestrained degree the grosser appetites? It was not because they were unacquainted with the most emphatic precepts of morality. Their ancestors had idealized feminine chastity as it has been exalted among no other people in the history of the world. The virtue of temperance was taught by their philosophers in the most eloquent language; and the diatribes of their satirists are evidence that the Roman conscience was not wholly at rest in regard to the excesses which were prevalent. How then are we to account for this monotonous orgy of libidinosity?

So far as the question concerns the emperors, there is but one answer: it is found in their unbounded power, in which, their will being responsible to no one, they were absolutely at liberty to indulge caprice or lustful impulse to the extent of their personal capabilities. When, as was natural in the circumstances, the characters of these potentates were warped in the wrong direction, their influence, not to speak of their tyrannical power, was incalculably detrimental to female virtue. But the real underlying cause for the sensuality of the women whom we have brought into review was the utter purposelessness of their lives, joined to an entire lack of all spiritual impulses in the direction of self-respect. The Roman woman's life during the period under discussion was one of absolute ease and unbounded luxury, although the possibility of abject physical misery, in the form of banishment or a violent death, always hovered near. Luxury is always

THE CHIEF VESTAL

After the painting by Henri P. Motte

Vestals were believed by the Romans to be the guaranties for the existence of the Empire. To these priestesses was paid a respect as great if not greater than any Roman official might claim. Anyone offering insult was punished with death. Whenever a Vestal appeared in public, she was preceded by a lictor, before whom everyone made way, even the highest officer of the State. The fasces were always lowered in her presence. . . . Domitian constituted himself censor; his attention was turned first to the college of Vestal Virgins, who had become notorious for licentiousness. Three priestesses received an order to make away with themselves. Cornelia, the chief Vestal and the worst offender, was condemned to suffer the punishment of entombment. As she was descending to the tomb, Cornelia's veil caught on the steps; when an official offered to disentangle it, the Vestal in a horrified manner bade him desist, as her consecrated character could not endure the profane touch of a man.

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conducive to sexual incontinence; and, as is well known, customary peril engenders recklessness. The minds of the Roman women were not fortified by adequate spiritual impressions to offset these impulses. Such ideas of chastity as were inherited from the ancient customs were not founded on a belief in the dignity of womanhood, but rather on the conception of marriage as a property right held by the husband in the person of the wife. Adultery was the infringement of the husband's property rights, rather than an injury to a woman's personal worth to herself. When divorce for political reasons became common, the sense of the validity of those rights grew correspondingly dim. A woman, seeing that she was married not for her person, but for the sake of her friends, came herself to set little store by that which to her husband was not the chief item in the contract. The arid formalism of her religion also gave but little support to any restraining instincts of self-respect. It needed a new religion to enable woman to rediscover in herself a spiritual nature, which could be tainted and injured by the abuse of the body.

Chapter XIII

The Sunset Glow of Paganism

XIII

THE SUNSET GLOW OF PAGANISM

GIBBON expresses the opinion that in no period of the world's history has the human race been happier or more prosperous than during the time which elapsed between the reigns of Domitian and Commodus. There is not a little that may be said in support of this remarkable conclusion. Under Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, the Empire enjoyed the calm and brilliant evening following a long day of bitter strife and perilous turmoil, and preceding the moral darkness of the rule of the tyrants under whom paganism was fated to expire.

During this period, Italy and the interior provinces of the Empire were entirely free from the rude alarms of war. The home of that day was as secure from violence as it is among ourselves at the present time. No wife or daughter had occasion unavailingly to beg the life of husband or father from the jealous or timid cruelty of a self-indulgent ruler. In the home circle, there was no foreboding dread of proscription. The terrible laws regarding *crimen majestatis,* under which so many cruelties had been perpetrated and so many families unjustly bereaved, were held in abeyance. Pliny writes to Trajan: "It is said, sir, that a woman and her sons have been buried in the same place where your statue is set up." This, under some of the

former emperors, would have been a grave matter; a woman was executed under Domitian because she disrobed before a statue of the emperor. But Trajan writes: "You should not have hesitated about such a question, for you know very well that I do not propose to make my name respected by terror and by accusations of treason. Dismiss this charge, which I shall not consider."

The people were prosperous. The vast extent of the Roman dominion, with its thoroughly organized and centralized government and its easy means of communication, interchanged a wonderful abundance and variety of the products of industry and commerce. At no time previous to the discovery of America did housewife ever draw the supplies for her table and her wardrobe from such widely separated quarters of the earth's surface as did the Roman woman in the time of Hadrian. As a modern historian has said: "The world was opened; the most secluded places had become accessible; all things circulated without let or hindrance. It was free trade, with its advantageous results in abundance and low prices. All the produce of the world came into Rome by the Tiber. The women of the Bernese Oberland bought their ornaments of a jeweller in Asia Minor, and thought less of it than we of procuring rugs from Smyrna or Damascus."

The people also were protected by salutary laws. The women of that day, when they went to the shops and purchased by weight or measure, were assured of honest dealing. There were standards kept in the municipal cities, and every tradesman was obliged to have his weights and measures tested by them; he was also subject to unannounced inspection. Never were wise laws more perfectly executed. How thoroughly the mind of Trajan was imbued with the idea that his mission was to administer the Empire for the benefit of the people is shown by

his correspondence with Pliny. Hadrian spent almost the whole of his reign in travelling from one province to another, in order that he might not only satisfy his curiosity, but also secure good government by personal inspection.

The people also enjoyed a fair semblance of liberty. True, they were not free. The rule of the Antonines was as absolute as that of the first Cæsars; but the emperors of the period we are describing, ostentatiously and to the great contentment of the people, professed to administer the laws only as they were enacted by the Senate and to be themselves governed by the constitution. It was but a phantom of liberty, truly; but when has the world really seen more? The five emperors who followed Domitian exercised their absolute power under the guidance of virtue and wisdom; and, whether or not it were an honorable peace, the people were contented and happy.

The effect of this wise, strong, all-pervading government must have been made especially apparent in the woman's world of that time. There are no gains for women in war. The glory sought by man is no compensation for the wife's anxiety entailed by her fear of bereavement. In the hazards of foreign strife or the dangers of civil turmoil, woman may exemplify those possibilities of her character which reveal themselves in the heroism of devotion or resignation; but the normal qualities of her nature do not expand as in the quiet comfort of a home life where safety is assured.

In the history of Roman women, down to the period which we have now reached, there has been no opportunity to ascertain what the combined influences of culture and peace might accomplish. In the ancient Republic, culture of any appreciable degree was absent and life was continuously strenuous. In later days, when Roman hardihood

was first touched by Greek civilization, and the love of letters began to find a place in woman's life, the Roman matron, though admirable and statuesque, was too heroic in her virtue to be altogether attractive. A writer of a later day—than whom none more keenly regretted the ancient purity—felt this. "Let her be more chaste than any single Sabine that, with hair dishevelled, rushed between the combatants and brought the war to a close; let her be a very phœnix upon earth, rare as a black swan; who could tolerate a wife in whom all excellencies are concentrated! I would rather, far rather, have a country maiden from Venusia than you, O Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, if along with your estimable virtues you bring as part of your dower a haughty and disdainful brow, and reckon as a portion of your fortune the triumphs of your house! Away, I beg, with your Hannibal and Syphax conquered in his camp, and march with all your Carthage!"

Equally unconducive to a feminine life combining sweetness with nobility were those later times, when danger was always imminent from a tyrant's lust or jealousy. Agrippina, travelling with Germanicus in expeditions against the Teutonic tribes, might earn the title "Mother of the Camps"; menaced by Tiberius, she might strengthen her mind in anticipation of the inevitable storm with the stern fortitude becoming to a Roman matron of the house of Augustus; but with years and affliction comes an unamiable sourness of disposition. Livia, Agrippina, and Antonia were women of the most unquestionable virtue; but they were ungentle in their manner and capable of extreme harshness in their methods. We know them fairly well; but there is no indication of their interesting themselves in any such womanly work as those public charities which graced the reign of Trajan, and with which we may be reasonably certain that Plotina, his noble consort, actively

sympathized. With assured security of life, woman's heart expanded and her sympathies widened. Faustina, the wife of Aurelius, may not have been irreproachable; but she is represented in the position of the Lady Bountiful by the side of her husband in the public distributions. Under these noble emperors, a social conscience was developed; and there was nothing to prevent or disturb any of the genial graces of the home life, which are only possible when women are respected and happy.

During this period, the legal condition of the Roman woman was also greatly ameliorated. The acute sense of justice which actuated these emperors could not neglect this result of civilization. On one occasion, a matron stopped Hadrian in the street and begged leave to submit to him a matter in which she was suffering injustice. He refused to be delayed. "Why, then, are you emperor?" she bitterly exclaimed. This appealed to him; for he was conscious that he had no right to govern unless he allowed the salutary influence of his rule to extend to all alike.

A man and a woman, who, though they had cohabited, were not legally married, disputed as to the possession of their child in order to receive its share of the public allowance. "With whom do you live?" asked Hadrian of the child. "My mother," was the answer. "You rascal," said the emperor to the man, "you have no right to this allowance."

"I implore you," cried another woman, "to order that a part of my son's allowance be given to me." "But, my lord," said the son, "I do not acknowledge her to be my mother." "Then," answered Hadrian, "I shall not acknowledge you as a citizen."

These, it may be, were only casual incidents; but they indicate the sort of rule under which Rome had come, and they must have formed powerful precedents in future

rulings in such cases. Laws were also passed which helped to relieve the burden of legal injustice which from the first had rested upon the Roman woman. A father had it always in his power to compel his son to put away his wife, and could thus, if he chose, shatter the life of a faithful, loving woman and drive her from her home. Marcus Aurelius amended this tyrannical law, so that it could only be executed for great and just cause. Under the old code, a child was always subject to the condition of his mother at his birth; hence, if a free woman, after conception, was relegated to servitude by sentence of law, her child was born a slave. Hadrian decreed that if a woman was free at any time during her pregnancy, her child should be free. This would seem to be more of a relief to the child so born than to the mother; but, apart from the mother sympathy, the parent of a free son would be much more likely to regain her own liberty. This emperor also decided that women should have the power to dispose of the whole of their property by will, on obtaining the consent of their guardians. It was soon afterward decreed that such a will should be valid without such consent, and this made the property rights of the Roman woman as untrammelled as such laws have been in any country, almost down to the present time. There was also a modification of the law of inheritance, so that women were allowed to take from their sons; but to avail herself of this new law a freedwoman must have had no less than four children.

This material comfort and security of life would, of itself, hardly suffice to substantiate Gibbon's opinion as to the superior happiness of this particular period of the world's history; but there was something more. Human life is not rendered felicitous solely by the abundance of the things which a people possesses; there must be the power

to make the most of and enjoy them. It is with the life of a nation as it is with that of an individual—the happiest age is that immediately previous to the beginning of decadence; prior to that, the attention and energy are wholly taken up with the process of acquiring. The Roman Empire was now, as it were, balanced and resting on the summit of its greatness.

With one or two exceptions, never in the history of the world has so large a proportion of the citizens of a nation been capable of so fully appreciating the highest mental enjoyments. Art in those days was closely inwoven with the life of the people; they lived artistic lives. The women of that day moved habitually among those objects which the ladies of our time go to museums to admire. Their eyes were every day accustomed to rest upon the beautiful structures and statuary which are the wonder and the models of modern times. Every home, however modest, had about it much of the artistic; every public building was a magnificent example of architecture. Nothing was purely utilitarian, for life was not sordid. With an ample supply of the necessaries and luxuries of existence, and perfect protection through wise and beneficently administered laws, this added grace and beauty which pervaded everything lacked little to make the life of women in the days of Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines broader and happier than it has been in any other period, ancient or modern.

There were, however, two classes of persons which must not be left out of the estimate; and it may be suggested that a proper understanding of the conditions of their existence may detract greatly from the foregoing appreciation of the period under discussion: these are the slaves and the poor. But, inasmuch as what has been said is of the nature of a comparison, it can be justly

answered that the poor we have always with us, and until recently the institution of slavery has been a cherished one. At any rate, it was rare that a Roman slave woman was ill fed, while compulsory hunger is by no means uncommon in modern times.

Since so large a portion of those Roman slaves were women, it will be quite pertinent to our subject if we take a glance at this institution of slavery as it existed in the ancient world.

It is estimated that at one time no less than one-fifth of the population of Rome was in a condition of compulsory servitude. The number was kept up by birth, by the slave market, and by war. In ancient times, the creditor could sell the family of the debtor; the father also could dispose of his children in the same manner. These barbarous measures, however, were less resorted to as manners grew milder, though the laws permitting them were not repealed until the time of Diocletian. Parents had the legal right to expose their unwelcome children, and whoever chose to take the abandoned infants owned them as slaves; but Trajan granted to such children the perpetual right of claiming their freedom, on condition that they could prove that of their parents.

By the ancient law, the slave was nothing but a chattel. He possessed no rights, he had no will of his own, he was not a person, and could not seek protection from the law. Over him his master owned absolute power of life and death. Women slaves were wholly subject to their owner's will. They might be required to bear offspring for the mere sake of increasing their master's number of servants, with absolutely no regard to any sentiment they might cherish relative to such a matter. A slave could not legally marry; and for many centuries no union of that nature was held to have any binding force. When it is

considered that a large proportion of the slaves owned by Roman masters were secured as the spoils of war, or by kidnapping, and consequently included many persons of both sexes who were well born and educated, it is seen how peculiarly cruel was slavery in those times.

Gradually, principles of humanity prevailed in the softening of this condition, and it is probable that instincts of humanity on the part of the majority of owners induced them to do better than the law demanded. In the house of Columella, every slave woman who had three children was set free from labor, and she who had more was emancipated. During the period of the Antonines, laws were passed prohibiting masters from selling slaves to fight in the arena unless these had been convicted of some crime by public authority. They were not allowed to be left by will with the understanding that they were to fight with beasts. The killing of slaves became punishable as for murder; and even the slave's honor came to be protected, for a complaint could be lodged against the master for an attempt on the slave's modesty. Regard was also paid to the natural feelings of these unfortunate persons; for while those in a condition of slavery could not legally marry, yet, where the nuptial union had been formed it was not permitted that the husband and wife should be separated by sale. Thus we see that the Roman slaves, from a condition of absolute inhumanity in the days of the early Republic, came in the time of the Antonines to be so hedged about with the protection of the law that there was left little to be desired save the possession of their own persons. Still, it is not meant to be asserted that even in this mild period there was not ample scope for cruelty on the part of barbarous or ill-natured owners. Juvenal describes with great indignation how women would cause their female attendants to be unmercifully whipped.

But a just complaint of intolerable treatment was, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, legal ground for compelling the emancipation of the slave, or at least for providing him or her with a kinder owner.

Paganism has often been accused of having paid no attention whatsoever to public charities. On the contrary, during the period with which we are now occupied institutions of poor-relief were founded and were as remarkable for the wisdom with which they were organized as for the spirit of beneficence which they manifested. There was abundance of evidence in Pliny's time to show that his beautiful words were not mere rhetoric: "It is a duty to seek out those who are in want, to bring them aid, to support, and make them in a sense one's own family." Has the modern spirit anything better to say than this sentence which was inscribed upon a tomb: *There is in life but one beautiful thing, and this is beneficence?* The Romans of the Antonine period put this sentiment into practical operation in more ways than one. Nerva conceived the project of rendering State aid to poor parents to enable them to rear their children. Trajan, his successor, adopted this scheme and developed it on a magnificent scale. As early as the year 100, there were, in the city of Rome, as we learn from Pliny, no less than five thousand children who received this assistance. So much consideration was shown in the arrangement for this distribution, that it was ordered that the apportionment of the sick or absent should be reserved until it was sent for. From the Inscription of Veleia, one of the longest which have come down to us, and the table of the Bæbiani for the apportionment of food among the poor, we learn of the poor-relief system under which two hundred and sixty-four boys and thirty-six girls were supported. "The boys received annually one hundred and

ninety-two sesterces [$9.20], the girls one hundred and forty-four [$6.90]. The foundation was established for a definite number of children, a number that did not change so long as the foundation was not increased; but the assistance varied, doubtless with the price of provisions, in different localities; thus, at Veleia, sixteen sesterces per month; at Tarracina, twenty." The writer of the above demonstrates by authorities and examples that from sixteen to twenty sesterces per month was sufficient to support a Roman child. He continues:

"It cannot be affirmed that the institution was in a general measure established in the whole of Italy; but coins, inscriptions, and even sculptures, enable us to discover it in many places. Thus the bas-reliefs of the Arch of Beneventum represent men carrying boys on their shoulders, and four women, their heads adorned with mural crowns, conducting young girls to Trajan. Do these women represent the four towns of the vicinity, or are they the symbol of all the cities of Italy which had profited by the same benefaction? The second hypothesis is the more probable, and Dion confirms it.

"Provincial cities and wealthy individuals followed the example given by the emperors; this pagan society, which ameliorated the lot of the slave, which was mindful of the destitution of its poor, thus showed before its downfall that it possessed within itself powers of renewal sufficient to save it, had it not been ruined by bad legislation."

This annuity did not cease with the end of Trajan's reign. Hadrian increased the length of time through which the boys and girls were to receive it. It is noticeable that fewer girls than boys were assisted, and, while the latter received the pension until the age of eighteen, it was taken from the girls at the age of fourteen. It must be confessed that this introduced a suspicion of utilitarianism

into the beneficence, girls at that time being considered of less advantage to the State than their brothers; but Antoninus, who was a man of peace and who would have much liked to be able to dispense with the army, in honor of his wife increased the number of girls on the lists for support; while on the death of the second Faustina, Marcus Aurelius followed his predecessor's example. Private persons, and especially ladies, also established foundations of this kind. To provide for a hundred children at Tarracina, Cælia Macrina bequeathed one million sesterces; Hispalis profited in a similar way by the legacy of a wealthy lady resident. The spirit in which the times viewed this subject is shown in the words of Paulus: "Donations," says he, "may be made to the city, either for its adornment or for its honor; and among the things which honor a city the most is the practice of giving support to infirm old men and to young children of both sexes." There is also proof that in many cities physicians were salaried by the municipality and required to render gratuitous assistance to the poor.

It is a fact exceedingly to be regretted that, while we find so much that is admirable in this period by means of which the female portion of society was benefited and for the existence of which much credit is undoubtedly owing to the noble women of the time, yet the records of individual women are extremely unsatisfactory. In the first place, they are very meagre. Unfortunately, there are no such brilliant and copious histories of the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian as of those of the previous and less worthy emperors. Of individual women, apart from those of the imperial house of this period, we know nothing. The records of the empresses and of their female relatives exhibit a similarity to the scandalous accounts of their predecessors which is sadly monotonous and entirely

unworthy of the otherwise wonderfully improved conditions. It is doubtful whether or not the characters of the Faustinas could be rehabilitated if trustworthy evidence were obtainable; but, even if that were possible, there would still be nothing to secure for them equal moral rank with their noble husbands. There is a fine exception, however, in the character of Plotina, the wife of Trajan. In the Vatican Museum there is a bust of this noble woman. It shows a lady advanced in years, but with a countenance charmingly suggestive of intelligence and moral dignity.

Trajan was a plain, honest soldier, who, when he was proclaimed emperor on the death of Nerva, entered the city on foot and recognized his old friends as he passed on his way to the palace. Plotina Pompeia accompanied him; and as she mounted the steps of the imperial abode, she turned to the people and said: "Such as I am entering here, I desire to be when I leave here." She must have been then in the prime of her womanhood; for her husband reigned nineteen years, and she outlived him. Her life in the palace, unlike that of the majority of her predecessors, was distinguished by her unassailable virtue, her affability, and her charitable activity on behalf of the poor and needy. We may safely be assured that though the charitable scheme already described was developed by the mind of her husband, he was stimulated thereto by the gracious counsel of Plotina. She accompanied her husband on his expedition in the East, and was with him when he died in Cilicia, whence she carried his ashes to Rome. Under Hadrian she still continued to enjoy all the honors and titles of a Roman empress.

The accession of Hadrian to the throne is surrounded by a mystery which must forever remain impenetrable. Gibbon repeats the gossip which the ancient historians handed down as veritable fact, when he says: "We may

readily believe that the father of his country hesitated whether he ought to intrust the various and doubtful character of his kinsman Hadrian with sovereign power. In his last moments, the arts of the Empress Plotina either fixed the irresolution of Trajan, or boldly supposed a fictitious adoption; the truth of which could not be safely disputed, and Hadrian was peaceably acknowledged as his lawful successor." Dion asserted on the authority of his father, who was Governor of Cilicia, where Trajan died, that the adoption never took place and that Plotina forged the letters which were sent to Rome, apparently from Trajan, informing the Senate of his choice. Some even went so far as to say that, the moment after the emperor's death, he not having named Hadrian, Plotina caused a man to be placed in his bed to simulate his dying voice saying that he appointed Hadrian his successor.

This is a flimsy story, and rather suggests the triviality of the minds of those who concocted it than it impairs the character of Plotina. Hadrian had married Sabina, the daughter of Matilda, who was in turn the daughter of Marciana, Trajan's sister. Moreover, the emperor had showered favors upon him, and appointed him to the highest offices. To whom else should Trajan leave the Empire? Nevertheless, it is probable that Hadrian was greatly liked by the powerful empress, and she may have shown a deep interest in the adoption of the youth by her husband. In courts, where there are of necessity jealousy and rival ambitions, from such innocent facts will formidable scandals grow. Every other mention of her is evidence against the insinuation that the maternal affection of Plotina for Hadrian was tinctured with love of a stronger nature.

Hadrian's mother was a native of Cadiz. How she was held in the esteem of her imperial son is indicated in the following letter which he wrote her: "All hail, very dear

and excellent mother. Whatever you ask of the gods for me, I ask the same for you. By Hercules, I am delighted that my acts seem to you worthy of praise. To-day is my birthday; we must take supper together. Come, then, well dressed, with my sisters. Sabina, who is at our villa, has sent her share for the family repast."

Through the meagre and inconclusive accounts we have of the private affairs of Hadrian, the allegation is circulated that his life with Sabina was far from being an amicable one. The empress was said to be of a morose and sour disposition, and Hadrian is even accused of having rid himself of her by the help of poison. The latter is a calumny unworthy of serious attention. It is altogether impossible to believe that, even if the chasm between the two were as wide as is reported, the emperor would not have sought relief in divorce rather than in murder. However praiseworthy may have been Hadrian's character as an emperor, if Sabina stood upon her rights as a wife, she had every reason for holding him in supreme contempt; for common as may have been the vice to which there seems to be little doubt Hadrian was addicted, it is difficult to believe that any woman retaining the least respect for herself could at the same time retain any regard for such a husband. The state of affairs between this imperial couple may have been very unpleasant; but at least a semblance of harmony was preserved. Hadrian even protected his wife; when Suetonius the historian in some way failed in proper respect for Sabina, the emperor immediately banished him from the court. The empress also seems to have accompanied her husband on many of his extensive journeys. We have an interesting proof and record of her having been with him in Egypt. She ascended the Nile as far as Thebes and visited the statue of Memnon, the son of Aurora, who was reported to sing

every morning in honor of his radiant mother's return. Balbilla the poetess caused three of her verses to be engraved on the leg of the statue, in which she records this visit. They are dated the twentieth and twenty-first of November, 130. It seems that the god did not show proper respect for Sabina, nor did he in the least stand in awe of "the angry countenance of the empress," for on the occasion of her first visit he was not in a singing mood.

From her portraits, one would not judge Sabina to have been of a morose and bitter disposition. There is in the Vatican a statue of the empress represented as Venus Genitrix, while there is also a bust of her in the Capitol Museum. If these are faithful likenesses, it is as difficult to believe that Sabina was of an unamiable disposition as it is to understand Hadrian's preference for Antinous. In connection with this subject Gibbon says that, down to the time of Hadrian, Claudius was the only emperor whose taste in love matters was at all correct. This being the case, it is only just to say that, if example could afford it, the empresses had ample excuse for the most flagrant irregularities recorded of them.

Antoninus Pius was adopted by Hadrian and designated his successor, without the aid of any woman whatsoever—except that Sabina failed to provide an occupant for the throne by the act of maternity.

The wife of Antoninus was Annia Galeria Faustina. She had borne him four children; but at the time of his accession only one daughter, named after her mother, survived. The annals of the period of this reign are extremely meagre and unsatisfactory. It has been said that while the unanimous praises that are bestowed upon the virtues of Antoninus earn for him in pagan history the place held by Saint Louis among Christian kings, his political career is so uncertain that, as emperor, he

appears before us a half-effaced figure, whose outlines are wholly indistinct.

Faustina the Elder did not live long to enjoy the dignity of empress; but in private life she had established for herself such a reputation, if all accounts be true, that she simply added one more to the list of immoral empresses who had disgraced the palace. Yet it must be admitted that these reflections upon her character are extremely ill-founded, and indeed there is evidence to the contrary which tends to make them seem absurd. Fronto, a philosopher of the period, pronounced a eulogy upon her, concerning which Antoninus wrote: "In the discourse which thou hast devoted to my Faustina I have found even more truth than eloquence. For it is the fact—yes, by the gods! I would rather live with her on the desert island of Gyaros than without her in the palace." This is not merely affection; from a man of Antoninus's character, it indicates an esteem which it would have been impossible for him to cherish, or even express, had Faustina been the wanton that the unreliable memoirs of the time describe her.

After the death of his wife, Antoninus refused to marry again, though he consoled himself with a concubine; he would not impart to another woman the honors and the position which he had rejoiced to share with Faustina. Indeed, such devoted affection is shown in the manner in which this emperor revered the memory of his deceased wife, that it would be one of the beautiful things in history were it not for the fact that the suspicion fastened upon her reputation, though very improbable, cannot be entirely eradicated, for lack of evidence to the contrary. Antoninus built a temple to her honor, and after his death the Senate reconsecrated it: *To the god Antoninus and to the goddess Faustina.* The emperor also did what was far

more advantageous to his people, and was an equal proof of his love for Faustina: he established in the name of his wife a charitable foundation for the support and education of girls. There is in existence a medal bearing the empress's image, and on the reverse a representation of Antoninus surrounded by young children, with this inscription: *Puellæ Faustinianæ.*

When Hadrian appointed Antoninus as his successor, he obliged the latter to adopt as his son Marcus Annius Verus, known in history and in philosophy as Marcus Aurelius. The mother of Marcus Aurelius was Domitia Lucilla, a lady of consular rank and a descendant of Domitius Afer. She seems to have been a woman in every way an ornament to these better times. In his *Meditations,* the imperial philosopher acknowledges that from his mother he inherited "piety, and beneficence, and abstinence not only from evil deeds, but even from evil thoughts; and further, simplicity of life far removed from the habits of the rich." One would like to dwell on the character of this sweet-natured, pure-hearted Lucilla. It would be an inestimable boon to the interests of history and also of moral philosophy if we had a biography of the mother of a good emperor; but unfortunately the pitiable historians of the time have given us instead scandals regarding Faustina. There are, however, one or two little incidents recorded which warrant us in the belief that if we only knew more of her life we should have in Lucilla a name and a portrait worthy of a place among those of the most honored women of the world. She encouraged her son in his philosophic studies; but when his enthusiasm carried him to such an excess of self-discipline that he purposed to sleep on bare boards, his mother prevailed on him to indulge himself with the luxury of a sheepskin rug.

Marcus Aurelius expresses his thankfulness that "though it was my mother's fate to die young, she spent the last years of her life with me." In one of his letters to Fronto, he describes a day spent in the country during the vintage. "When I returned home," he says, "I studied a little, but not to much advantage. I had a long talk with my mother, who was lying on her couch." Those talks with a mother from whom he had learned to hate the thought of evil were of inestimable value to his character, and thus have not been wholly lost to the world.

On one occasion, Lucilla was noticed by Antoninus Pius in the act of earnest prayer before the image of Apollo. "What think you she is praying for so intently?" insinuated a mischief maker named Valerius Omulus; "it is that you may die, and her son reign in your stead." Antoninus ignored the base suggestion in silent contempt. It is very possible that Lucilla was praying for her son's reign, but for the worthiness of its character rather than for the speediness of its commencement.

Unfortunately, though it may not be necessary to believe all that is said against her, it is at least very apparent that Faustina the wife of Marcus Aurelius was not such a woman as Lucilla his mother. Gibbon sums up in the following paragraph the whole story as it may be gleaned from the very indifferent ancient authorities:

"Faustina, the daughter of Pius and the wife of Marcus, has been as much celebrated for her gallantries as for her beauty. The grave simplicity of the philosopher was ill calculated to engage her wanton levity, or to fix that unbounded passion for variety which often discovered merit in the meanest of mankind. The Cupid of the ancients was, in general, a very sensual deity; and the amours of an empress, as they exact on her side the plainest advances, are seldom susceptible of much sentimental

delicacy. Marcus was the only man in the Empire who seemed ignorant or insensible of the irregularities of Faustina; which, according to the prejudices of every age, reflected some disgrace on the injured husband. He promoted several of her lovers to posts of honor and profit, and, during a connection of thirty years, invariably gave her proofs of the most tender confidence and of a respect which ended not with her life. In his *Meditations,* he thanks the gods who had bestowed on him a wife so faithful, so gentle, and of such a wonderful simplicity of manners. The obsequious Senate, at his earnest request, declared her a goddess. She was represented in her temples with the attributes of Juno, Venus, and Ceres; and it was decreed that, on the day of their nuptials, the youth of either sex should pay their vows before the altar of their chaste patroness."

It would be a preposterous undertaking to accept a brief for Faustina; and yet, judging such evidence as we have in the light of common sense, one is inclined to acquit her of some charges, or at least to demand for her a verdict of "not proven." Who are the witnesses against her? Capitolinus, who wrote the life of Marcus Aurelius, is one. He wrote in the time of Diocletian, one hundred and twenty years after the events. Surely the lapse of time will to a certain degree depreciate the value of the evidence; and then Capitolinus is an exceedingly poor biographer. Dion Cassius is the principal witness; but it is very apparent that Dion Cassius was accustomed to report indiscriminately every bit of scandal he heard about anybody. He was constitutionally malignant. It is very doubtful if any modern jury, knowing his character, would convict a petty thief on the evidence of Dion Cassius. Because Commodus, the son of Faustina, developed an abnormal love for bloody sports and manifested a strong

regard for the heroes of the arena, malicious tongues asserted that he was the son of a gladiator; but the strong resemblance which may be traced in the statues and bust of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus is sufficient to refute this part of the charge. This likeness is also attested by Fronto, who, though he may have desired to compliment the emperor, was assuredly a man of too much character to adopt this particular method if he knew Faustina to be the woman she is represented. Then again, if her habits were as vicious as they are described, it is absolutely inconceivable that her husband should have remained in ignorance of the fact; it would imply that he must have been nothing more or less than an imbecile, which Marcus Aurelius decidedly was not. If, on the other hand, he knew of his wife's promiscuous amours, it is incredible that he should have had the effrontery to laud his wife's faithfulness and virtue before the public; it is inconceivable that he should have manifested toward her such confidence and esteem in their private relations. Our judgment is influenced more by the treatment she received from her husband than by the venomous testimony of Dion.

One of the charges against Faustina is that she abetted the conspiracy of Avidius Cassius by offering him her hand in the event of her husband's being slain. This even the biographer of Cassius denies, and quotes a letter of Faustina's in proof.

There must, however, have been some cause for these reports of the empress's conduct, even though they are greatly exaggerated. We may take it for granted that Faustina was not worthy of her noble husband. It is very possible that she had little regard for his philosophical maxims and less liking for his austerities. She may have been more forcibly attracted by the handsome appearance and gay manner of Verus, her husband's colleague in the

Empire; but that she was so absolutely wanton as the ancient anecdotists describe requires no contravention of the principles of historical criticism to disbelieve.

The letters of Faustina to Marcus Aurelius were preserved by Vulcatius Gallicanus, and Victor Duruy says they are those of an empress, a wife, and a mother. She often accompanied her husband on his many trying expeditions, and thus gained from the soldiers the title of "Mother of the Camps." It was on such a journey, at the foot of Mount Taurus, that she died. There has been preserved a bas-relief which represents Faustina carried by a winged being in human form from the funeral pyre to heaven; the emperor sits below and points out to his daughter the apotheosis of her mother, while he himself follows the departing figure with affectionate eyes. At the theatre, her statue, formed of gold, was placed in the position which she had been accustomed to occupy. To honor her memory, a new foundation for the support of the daughters of indigent parents was instituted; and at the Villa Albani there is another bas-relief, which represents Faustina surrounded by young girls and distributing among them corn, which they receive in the folds of their dresses.

In the period of the Antonines, paganism was at its best. It was then afforded a magnificent opportunity to show how far in the direction of social progress and moral development the human race could be carried under its influence. It was on its trial before the evolutionary forces of the universe. What is the verdict? That paganism has disappeared cannot be said; for much that was essential to the system is still inherent in the prevailing religion of the civilized world to-day. But how did the ancient system of religion respond to the quest for those influences which make for human happiness, both for the man and the

woman—for here there can be no distinction? There is much in the old system, as it answers for itself in the period under discussion, that is extremely satisfactory, much that will compare most favorably with like conditions in modern times. We have seen how a social conscience was evolved, and how most admirable methods were adopted for the purpose of supporting poor girls and boys. It has been noticed how in this period life was secure, happy, and beautiful. The conditions of slavery were ameliorated, so that involuntary servitude became, in some respects, less severe than it was in Christian lands during the last century. Woman's legal position was greatly improved, affording her an independence, all things considered, which she did not enjoy during the Middle Ages. This banner age of paganism was also capable of producing such men as Pliny and the Antonines. Unfortunately, history lacks such records as would reveal the best examples of the women who graced this period. Instead of the noblest, we have only the most conspicuous. We are shown the Faustinas, because they lived in the palace; but, notwithstanding the excellence of the husbands of these women, it is true that a palace is the least promising soil for the cultivation of moral beauty. Yet in Plotina and Lucilla we find such characters as warrant the belief that in humbler walks there were many women whose lives would not have suffered severe criticism if they had been tried by the principles of the modern morality.

Much was accomplished under the ancient system; but the time exhibited the best possibilities of paganism. It could do no better; and it soon prepared to leave the field in the possession of a victor. It could not soften the heart and thus dispense with its cruelties. It could not emancipate all its slaves; it contained in itself no indictment of

slavery. It recognized that all men are of one blood, but it did not evolve the idea of universal brotherhood or the Golden Rule. It had no argument for morality which could appeal to the unphilosophic common multitude. In these things it was weighed and found wanting; for these reasons it could not perpetuate itself.

Chapter XIV

The Passing of Paganism

XIV

THE PASSING OF PAGANISM

FROM the reign of Commodus must be dated the beginning of the Decline. From now on, two influences are at work undermining the structure of the ancient Empire; we see the double process of disintegration and conversion. Pagan civilization had finished its day and must make way for the dawn of a new era. The Roman Empire fell to pieces because the sword, which was the only bond by which its heterogeneous conquests could be held together, became insubordinate to the political authority. After the second century, the army was rarely led to new foreign victories. It became the instrument of revolt; it bartered the Empire, and supported or assassinated adventitious claimants for the throne at its wild caprice. At last, the old Roman spirit having entirely departed, the barbarians made an easy prey of the decaying body.

In the meantime the gods, who, so far as their effective existence was concerned, had been long since discredited, were deposed from the minds of an increasing number of the people, to make room for a new and purer faith. But the rise of Christianity did not follow the brilliant day of paganism without an intervening night. Literature, art, and the science of domestic and social life deteriorated, as European society fell to the rude habits of the dark ages

of feudalism. In this closing chapter, it is our purpose to follow the fortunes of pagan woman life down to the time when, under Constantine, Christianity became the State religion.

In the accession of Commodus is seen the return to the rule of that despotism, joined with moral insanity, from which Rome had been free since the days of Domitian. The Empire was again allowed to take care of itself, while the emperor occupied himself with abominable indulgences and murderous executions.

Under the preceding emperors, moral courtiers had been in favor. Now, the opposite example was set, and the women as well as the men were much more eager to rush into profligacy than they had been, under Marcus Aurelius, to take up philosophy. The two empresses were leaders in the new fashion. Crispina, the wife of Commodus, either carried her intrigues too far or in some other way made herself obnoxious to her husband, for she was banished to Capri and shortly afterward put to death. It is noticeable that the worst men were the quickest to punish laxity in the conduct of their own wives. They were more suspicious; they had a more alert sense of amorous possibilities; they were in a better position to discover clues; and they were devoid of conscience, which, at least, might have dictated to them a policy of fair play.

Lucilla, the daughter of Marcus Aurelius and the sister of Commodus, inherited nothing of her grandmother's character with her name. Atavism in her case was not effectual. She had been the spouse of her father's colleague, Verus, and she retained her imperial honors from this connection; so that she occupied the emperor's box at the theatre and had the sacred fire, the symbol of majesty, carried before her as she passed through the streets. Her lovers were numerous.

Apart from such failings as those sensual indulgences so customary among the Romans, the reign of Commodus for the first three years was fairly respectable. He had as yet shown no symptom of mercilessness; but one night, as he was traversing an ill-lighted passage in the palace, a Senator rushed upon him with the words: "The Senate sends you this." The threat saved the emperor's life, the guards at once overpowering the assassin. The plot owed its origin to Lucilla. Dissatisfied with the second place in the Empire, the misguided woman designed, upon the death of her brother, to place on the throne one of her lovers, with whom she would reign in concert. That her destined accomplice was not Claudius Pompeianus, her respectable though somewhat aged husband, may be assumed from the fact that he was not privy to the plot. Lucilla was punished with exile and, later, with death. From this time, Commodus gave rein to his cruel disposition without restraint; the slightest suspicion on his part, or an insinuation on that of his favorites, sufficed to authorize an execution. Rome had once been at the mercy of a buffoon who was deluded with the idea that he possessed a heavenly voice; she was now ravaged by a gladiator who believed himself to be a second Hercules. His extravagance being enormous, and the execution of the rich being the easiest way to recuperate the treasury, many women as well as men lost their lives on account of their wealth.

Among the possessions of one of his victims, Commodus discovered a very beautiful woman, with whom he at once fell desperately in love. There is in the Cabinet de France a bronze medallion representing the features of Commodus and Marcia conjoined in profile. There are also other indications that this woman, whom the emperor made his concubine, was accorded almost the honors of an empress.

She is traditionally credited with having been a Christian; but, though she may have favored Christianity, and probably it was to her influence that its adherents owed their safety during this reign, her own life did not so closely correspond with the teaching of that faith as to render her worthy of the title of Christian.

Marcia endeavored to dissuade her imperial lover from some of his bloodthirsty purposes, and as a reward he placed her own name with that of two of his chief officials on his tablets which contained the list of the fated. These tablets were discovered under his pillow and fell into Marcia's hands. She realized that desperate measures were immediately demanded. Consulting with the others whose lives were threatened, they decided that she should administer to the emperor poison in his wine. This she did; but, doubtful as to the effect, they introduced a young wrestler, who strangled Commodus in his sleep. No assassination planned by a female mind was ever more excusable than this. The act saved Marcia her life, and rid the world of one in comparison with whom the monsters slain by Perseus were desirable neighbors.

For a time the Empire went begging for a ruler. Pertinax, a man who from being the son of a charcoal dealer had raised himself to the position of consul, was chosen by the assassins of Commodus; but Pertinax was not eager for the exalted but dangerous position of emperor. He offered it to some of the Senators, but they declined the magnificent gift with thanks. The soldiers, finding in their camp a Senator whom they preferred to Pertinax, proposed to make him emperor; but he escaped and ran away from the city. Pertinax was at last induced to accept; and could he have retained the rule, Rome would have entered again upon a period like that of Trajan. He refused to allow his wife to take the title of Augusta,

judging that she had done nothing to earn it. He put up to auction the inmates of the seraglio of Commodus, in order to replenish the empty treasury, giving, however, their liberty to those who had been forcibly abducted from their homes. But his government was too rigid for the prætorian guard, and they ended it by assassinating him after a reign of only eighty days.

There was in Rome at this time a woman named Manlia Scantilla. She was the wife of a Senator, by name Julianus, who possessed immense wealth and had filled all the highest offices of the State. After the murder of Pertinax, Manlia heard that the prætorian guards were offering the Empire to the highest bidder. Her household was at the moment sitting down to a sumptuous banquet. Manlia and her daughter, carried away by their ambition, urged Julianus not to miss so favorable an opportunity to seat himself on the throne and to clothe them in the imperial purple; if wealth was the only qualification, Julianus possessed it. He hurried to the camp, and while the father-in-law of the dead Pertinax made his offers from within he raised them from without the ramparts. At last the Empire was knocked down to him for six thousand two hundred and fifty drachmas [about one thousand two hundred and fifty dollars] to each prætorian. After he had received the oaths of his new guards and had been presented to the Senate, he went to the palace. There he saw, still untouched, the frugal meal which had been prepared for Pertinax. Contemptuously sneering at this, he commanded a banquet to be served that was worthy of an emperor, at which he, Manlia, and their friends, while regaling themselves, were entertained by the performances of Pylades, a celebrated dancer. Their occupancy of the palace, however, was brief. The people were disgusted, and the legions in the provinces were roused to furious

indignation. Pescennius Niger, commanding in Syria, was proclaimed emperor by his soldiers, and Septimus Severus received the same honor in Upper Pannonia. The latter marched upon Rome, and Julianus was soon convinced that his high-priced glory was not a good bargain. He was without support, though he endeavored to maintain the regard of the prætorians by executing Marcia, who had slain their darling Commodus; but the guards who had sold him the Empire were not minded to sacrifice themselves by maintaining him in its possession. They made no resistance when the Senate passed a decree of deposition and death against Julianus, at the same time acknowledging Severus as emperor. The former was beheaded, after reigning sixty-six days.

Once more Rome was to have an emperor worthy of the name. The manner in which Severus was received in the city was a good omen for his reign. "At the city's gates," says Dion Cassius, "Severus dismounted from his horse, and laid aside his military dress before entering Rome; but his whole army followed him into the city. It was the most imposing sight I ever saw. Throughout the city were garlands of flowers and laurel wreaths; the houses, adorned with hangings of different colors, were resplendent with the fire of sacrifices and the light of torches. The citizens, clad in white, filled the air with acclamations, and the soldiers advanced in martial order, as if at a triumph. We Senators headed the procession, wearing the insignia of our rank."

With the enthronement of Septimus Severus, there came to the city as his wife one of the most remarkable women of Roman history. Julia Domna was a native of Emesa in Syria, but at the same time a Roman subject. Severus had lost his first wife while he was governor in Gaul; and while he was commanding in Syria he became acquainted

with the daughter of Bassianus, priest of the Sun. It was not alone Julia's beauty that captivated him, though the bust and the noble stola-clad statue which are still preserved at Rome warrant the opinion that a single man of any susceptibility might well have excused in himself the lack of any other consideration. Severus, however, was a student of omens and divination, and well versed in the science of astrology. Julia's nativity had been cast, and the stars indicated that she was to be the wife of a sovereign. This decided Severus. He concluded that he could not do better than link his fortunes with those of a young lady who, though poor at present, had in prospect a future so promising. Julia Domna deserved all that the stars could predict for her. With the attractions of her person were united unusual powers of mind. It is said of her that she was capable of great boldness of purpose and equal prudence in putting her plans into effect; and to her is attributed also a strength of mind that is uncommon in her sex. Severus held her in the highest regard, and she was so accustomed to accompany him on his expeditions that she also earned that title which the soldiers always bestowed on such ladies—"The Mother of the Camps." On inscriptions she was spoken of as *domina*—the mistress. The number of these inscriptions proves the popularity of Julia among the Greeks also, by whom she was honored as "a new Demeter."

This empress was a patroness of letters; her friends were principally among the learned and the students of philosophy. Severus himself, we are told, greatly admired one of the ladies of her circle because she could read and understand Plato. It is extremely pleasant, after a long list of empresses the records of whose frailties are exceedingly monotonous, to imagine Julia Domna engaged in the study of the highest problems of life and befriending such

men as Ulpian and Galen. She thus earned for herself the title of Julia the Philosopher. There is every reason to believe that Diogenes Laertius dedicated to her his *History of the Greek Philosophers*. The book is dedicated to a woman who greatly admired the Academy; but as the name and the dedicatory epistle are missing, it is not absolutely certain whether it was Arria, mentioned in an earlier chapter, or the empress, who was thus honored. There is no doubt, however, that Julia engaged Philostratus to write for her the life of Apollonius of Tyana, the great Pythagorean thaumaturgist.

The great historian of the Decline of the Roman Empire says that while the grateful flattery of these learned men has extolled the virtues of the wife of Severus, "if we may credit the scandal of ancient history, chastity was very far from being the most conspicuous virtue of the Empress Julia." But Gibbon rarely questions an allegation of this sort; on the other hand, Dion Cassius, who zealously reports every such accusation, is, for a wonder, silent on this. Julia's intellectual tastes, not to speak of her four children, would be likely to preclude her falling into any gross immoralities.

Associated with the empress in the palace were her sister and two nieces, all bearing like her the name Julia. Her sister, Julia Mæsa, was no less remarkable than the empress; and in later days, by placing her grandsons on the throne, she presided over the destinies of the Empire as no other woman had hitherto done. Julia Soæmias is represented on coins as the Heavenly Virgin; but if the statement of Lampridius in regard to her mundane frailties is to be credited, her lightly adorned statue as Venus was more in character. Then there was Julia Mammæa, who reared one of the best, though not of the strongest, men who attained to the purple, and who, by her influence

over his mind, held the reins of government greatly to the immediate profit of the Empire.

Another lady of the court which surrounded Julia Domna was Plautilla, the daughter of Plautianus the prefect. Plautianus was the emperor's relative, and by him vested with powers almost equal to his own. He was an ambitious man, and, while probably faithful to his master, sought to secure his own position by marrying his daughter to the young prince Caracalla. This marriage was forced upon Caracalla much against his will, and proved disastrous to Plautilla; but it was an astoundingly magnificent affair. Dion relates that he saw the dowry of the bride carried into the palace, and declares that it was enough for fifty kings' daughters. The same historian tells of many tyrannous extravagances which Plautianus allowed himself on this occasion; but when he informs us that the latter caused one hundred freeborn Romans, many of them husbands and fathers of families, to be mutilated, in order that his daughter might be attended by a retinue of eunuchs in the Oriental fashion, our sense of what is possible, even in the most despotic circumstances, rebels. The ancient anecdotist further says that "the thing was not known until after Plautianus's death." It is surely inconceivable that the wives of these victims should have allowed such a thing to pass in silence.

Caracalla threatened the destruction of his bride and her father when he should come to the throne. The latter part of this menace he put into effect without waiting for his father's death. Plautilla seems not to have been blameless in the matter. Her father made himself the enemy of the empress and her son, and Plautilla by siding with him turned the indifference of her husband into positive hatred. The imperial family was rent with discord. Julia Domna did not endeavor to conciliate the powerful

favorite, and he sought her ruin by means of the new laws which had been passed against conjugal infidelity. If Dion may be believed in the matter, the prefect went so far as to subject women of noble family to torture, in order to procure evidence against the empress. This attempt does not seem to have been successful, and Caracalla soon found an opportunity to avenge the attempt to injure the reputation of his mother. Surprising his father with an accusation of treason on the part of the prefect, he caused the latter to be struck down before the emperor had time to ascertain the truth. Shortly afterward, Plautilla was exiled to Lipari; and when her husband came to the throne he caused her to be put to death.

Under Severus were decreed a number of laws which affected the life and the status of women. He had a strong sense of justice. When persons were banished, the law required that their property should be confiscated. On one occasion, when a mother and her son were about to suffer that punishment, the mother begged that enough might be taken from her possessions to afford her son the bare necessaries of life. The son also pleaded that from his property his mother might receive the same mercy. This mutual solicitude touched the emperor, and he said: "I cannot change the law; but it shall be as you desire."

He decreed that the husband who did not avenge his murdered wife should forfeit whatever of her dowry would otherwise legally fall to him. He also commanded that women who deprived their husbands of the hope of children by producing abortion should be condemned to temporary exile.

There were many women who, in slavery, were reduced to the necessity of earning money for their owners by their own prostitution. This was their only means of securing their liberty. It was made a misdemeanor for

anyone to reproach them for this misfortune, nor was it allowed that any woman should be forced against her will to adopt a life of infamy. Women were also prohibited from fighting in the arena. The laws against adultery were rendered more severe; but, from what we can learn of the times, this did not result in any marked effect upon social morality.

There was in existence a law forbidding provincial officials, and even their sons, to take wives from the province to which they were appointed. This was a wise measure; for it is easy to see how these officials, by the power afforded them through their position, might, in order to secure rich dowries, compel unwilling brides to accept their suit. Nevertheless, such marriages at times did take place. In order to enforce the spirit of the law, and to protect provincials from official tyranny in this respect, Severus ordered that an official who had married a wealthy heiress in his province should not be allowed to inherit from her.

Since Rome had possessed a standing army it had always been the rule that the soldiers should not be permitted to marry. The consequence was that the camps were surrounded by crowds of profligate women, as well as other women who had become the constant companions of soldiers but could not be legally married. Severus repealed this law and allowed the legionaries to contract legitimate marriages. Anyone who is cognizant of the effect of the residence of a garrison of unmarried soldiers in a European town can understand what a salutary influence this enactment of Severus would have upon general morality.

The principal thing in the life of Severus for which he can be justly criticised with severity is his appointment of Caracalla as one of his successors, and thus allowing

his parental affection to overcome his judgment of what was good for the Empire.

On their father's death, Caracalla and his greatly superior brother Geta were made joint emperors; but they were jealous of each other and could not agree. They proposed to divide the Empire. "But will you also divide your mother?" asked Julia; and with many exhortations she dissuaded them from resorting to this impracticable scheme.

Rome was once more to be harassed by the fury of a youthful monster. Caracalla concluded that one emperor would suffice. In order to carry out his purpose, he agreed to meet his brother in their mother's apartments and there discuss terms of reconciliation. While he was conversing with Geta, some centurions rushed into the room; and though his mother tried to protect her younger son with her arms, Caracalla urged the assassins to their work, and the empress herself was wounded and also covered with Geta's blood. Afterward, when the murderer found his mother in the midst of her female friends weeping over the fate of his brother, he threatened them all with death. This menace was indeed executed upon Fadilla, a surviving daughter of Marcus Aurelius. Milman says: "The most valuable paragraph of Dion, which the industry of M. Mai has recovered, relates to this daughter of Marcus, executed by Caracalla. Her name, as appears from Fronto, as well as from Dion, was Cornificia. When commanded to choose the kind of death she was to suffer, she burst into womanish tears; but remembering her father Marcus, she thus spoke: 'O my hapless soul, now imprisoned in the body, burst forth! be free! Show them, however reluctant to believe it, that thou art the daughter of Marcus.' She then laid aside all her ornaments, and, preparing herself for death, ordered her veins to be opened." Many

other women died at this time because they were supposed to be sympathizers with Geta.

It would have been an unnatural thing and a disgrace to humanity if Caracalla himself had escaped the assassin's hand. His fate came to him in his twenty-ninth year, as he was on a pilgrimage to the temple of the Moon; and Macrinus, who began life as a slave and was at one time a gladiator, reigned in his stead.

The Empress Julia Domna did not long outlive her son. Hers had been a strange career. From a humble position she had been raised to that of the highest lady in the world; and she had been a power in her time. During the reign of Caracalla, though she could not restrain his enormities, she had really administered the Empire. With her exaltation had also come the most bitter sorrow. One son had been killed in her arms by the other; and now the fratricide had fallen by the assassin's weapon. She was at Antioch when she heard of her son's death. The news wounded her both as a mother and also as an empress; one who had been the servant of her husband was now to rule over her. Though Macrinus treated her with great consideration, life seemed no longer tolerable, and she resolved to starve herself to death. This resolution was not less easy to form, inasmuch as she was suffering from an incurable disease. There are some intimations that she first thought it possible to raise herself to the throne and reign, as did some of her famous female contemporaries in the East; but she soon carried out the project dictated by hopelessness and starved herself to death.

After the death of Julia Domna, the other three Julias were commanded to return to Emesa, where was the temple of the Sun, in which the father of the family had been a priest. They were allowed to carry with them their

wealth; and this gold they soon found a means of using to the overthrow of Macrinus. Soæmias had a son named Bassianus, and Mammæa also had a son, who is most favorably known as the Emperor Alexander.

Bassianus was consecrated to the priesthood of the Sun. Macrinus had made the mistake of stationing a great many troops at Emesa, where he had sent these women, with minds full of dislike for himself and a house fuil of gold which they might use to his disadvantage. The soldiers fell in love with the young Bassianus, as they viewed his fine figure arrayed in the magnificent robes of his priestly office. Mæsa spread the idea among these legionaries that Bassianus was the son of the murdered Caracalla; the men thought they could detect a likeness, and Mæsa gave them large quantities of gold in order to improve their vision. Then they were sure that Bassianus bore a strong likeness to Caracalla, who must therefore have been his father. Mæsa had no more compunction about sacrificing her money than she had about casting an imputation upon her daughter's honor; she considered that the Empire would make amends for both, if she could only secure it. Bassianus—who was afterward known by the name of his god, Elagabalus—was but a youth of fifteen; he was sent by his grandmother to the camp, with wagons filled with gold. After distributing these arguments, he was proclaimed emperor under the name of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, it being supposed that this honor to the great philosopher would gain him favor with the people; and never was a better name adopted for the furtherance of a base purpose.

This was a conspiracy of women; but, owing to the corrupt character and the power of the soldiery, it succeeded. Macrinus made one hesitating effort to maintain his position on the throne; he scattered donations, and his troops fought a battle with those of Elagabalus. The latter were

on the point of being defeated, when Mæsa and Soæmias threw themselves into the fight, and by their courage and ardor reheartened the soldiers and thus gained the day.

Macrinus was not a bad emperor. He was considering plans of reform which would have been greatly for the benefit of the people; but he was removed to make way for the dissolute, effeminate Syrian priest of the Sun. There is a cameo of the time, which represents Elagabalus riding in a chariot drawn by two women who are crawling on their hands and knees. Mæsa and Soæmias assuredly did debase themselves in dragging such an emperor to the palace. His impure religion, added to his natural disposition, his absolute power, and his youth, made of his reign the very apotheosis of lust. The Senate received an emperor arrayed in the silken robes of his priesthood to a Syrian god, adorned with a tiara, necklaces, and bracelets, with his eyebrows tinged and his cheeks painted like those of an Oriental woman.

His grandmother and her two daughters accompanied him to Rome. These women differed in their character, and consequently in their conception of how Elagabalus and themselves should employ the newly gained power. Mæsa had been trained under the strict rule of Severus. She knew how moderation and attention to the welfare of the Empire was the course most likely to bring good results to the ruler and his family. The administration she proposed to keep in her own hands; but she desired her grandson at least to keep himself within the bounds of that liberty which in those times was considered decent. Soæmias, on the other hand, encouraged the young profligate in the belief that it was his right to indulge himself in any manner which his inclination warranted and his power made possible. Her advice seemed to him the more sensible, and he acted accordingly. He allowed his grandmother to take full

charge of all public matters, only requiring that she should not interfere with him in his pleasures. Mæsa had her seat in the Senate, near that of the Consuls; and for the first time Rome was confessedly under the rule of a woman. To his mother Elagabalus gave an appointment which was in accord with her tastes; she was made president of the woman's senate, which determined for the matrons their rank, costumes, and the quantity and nature of ornaments which each might wear according to her social position. Mammæa, however, kept in retirement, and endeavored as far as possible to shield her son from the contamination which surrounded them and also from the dangers of public notice.

The astounding follies of this reign, the licentiousness, the tyrannies, especially as they affected women, cannot better be summed up than in this picture drawn by Gibbon: "Elagabalus lavished away the treasures of the people in the wildest extravagance, his own voice and that of his flatterers applauded a spirit and magnificence unknown to the tameness of his predecessors. To confound the order of seasons and climates, to sport with the passions and prejudices of his subjects, to subvert every law of nature and decency, were in the number of his most delicious amusements. A long train of concubines, and a rapid succession of wives, among whom was a Vestal virgin, ravished by force from her sacred asylum, were insufficient to satisfy the impotence of his passions. The master of the Roman world affected to copy the dress and manners of the female sex, preferred the distaff to the sceptre, and dishonored the principal dignities of the Empire by distributing them among his numerous lovers, one of whom was publicly invested with the title and authority of the emperor's, or, as he more properly styled himself, of the empress's husband."

What a fall was this from the stern independence and the grand morality of the Romans who knew the mother of the Gracchi! The Roman Senators had become the slaves of a youth who pretended to be a dissolute woman; the best ladies of the Empire, however virtuously inclined, had no protection for their honor and no redress for their injuries, if they attracted the fancy of the emperor or his favorites. The ancient gods and goddesses, who, though the creations of superstitious imagination, had inspired the Romans in their struggle for empire and in that manner had aided them in securing it, were made the courtiers of the Syrian Sun-god, represented by a shapeless black stone.

The shrewd Mæsa saw that it would be impossible for Elagabalus to retain the throne and at the same time insult prejudices which were still dear and deep-rooted in the minds of the otherwise indifferent Romans. She determined, however, still to keep her family in power. The means thereto she found in her other grandson, Alexander, the son of Mammæa. By employing the argument that the high priest of the Sun should be uninterrupted in his heavenly calling and in his pleasures by the affairs of the world, she induced Elagabalus to adopt his cousin and invest him with the dignity of Cæsar.

Mammæa had encouraged the natural disposition of her son, who was inclined to amiability and uprightness; he speedily became a great favorite with the people and, what was to more purpose, with the soldiery. The son of Soæmias was not so blinded by his follies but that he saw with envy the growing popularity of his younger colleague; but instead of seeking to emulate his cousin in the good graces of the people by reforming his own life, he determined to remove his rival after the customary Roman fashion. But the watchful Mammæa so hedged her son about with

faithful servants that Elagabalus, who was weak-minded enough to talk of all his purposes, could find no instrument capable of penetrating this armor of a mother's care.

At last the emperor ordered the Senate to degrade Alexander from the dignity of Cæsar, while at the same time he sent assassins to murder him. The latter, for the reason already stated, failed in their errand; and the Senate received the command in silence and indignation. The soldiers were furious. They commanded the boys to be brought before the Senate, and charged that body to protect the one and see to the reformation of the manners of the other. The soldiers reproving the conduct of their emperor represents exactly the position which the supposed chief ruler of the Roman world now occupied. He was the subject of the army.

The rivalry between the two princes soon came to a crisis, and Mammæa, in order to save her son, set herself against her sister. Each of the two women endeavored to incite the prætorians against the other. Mammæa won; and Soæmias and her infamous son were slain.

Alexander was raised to the supreme position; but, being a dutiful and obedient youth, he allowed those two noble women, his grandmother and his mother, to hold the reins of government and also to advise him in his own personal conduct. The former, however, soon died, and Mammæa was constituted sole regent.

Mammæa was a woman who exhibited in herself the highest type of intelligence, as well as an honorably regulated life. She was a patroness of all learning and a student of philosophy. It was her desire to become acquainted with all theories concerning the highest problems of human existence; so much so that she sent for Origen, the best-educated Christian of his time, in order that she might satisfy her curiosity in regard to the teachings of

that rapidly spreading faith. She did not, however, become a Christian; even had she been convinced of the truth of Origen's doctrines, her position demanded of her a policy which, viewed from an entirely mundane standpoint, she could not afford to abandon. She had provided her son with instructors who were not only noted for their learning, but also for their unquestioned integrity. Herodian says: "The statues of the gods which Elagabalus had taken away were at once restored to their places. Those officials who had unworthily obtained office were dismissed and their places filled by the most capable citizens. In order to preserve the emperor from the mistakes which might be caused by absolute authority, the ardor of youth, or by some of the vices natural to his family, Mammæa strictly guarded the entrance to the palace, and allowed no man to gain admission whose morals were of bad repute."

Mammæa not only guarded her son, but, in his name and so far as the palace was able to reserve any real authority from the power of the camp, she ruled the Empire. She was wise and broad-minded enough to care nothing for the title and pageantry of rule; indeed, the indications seem to be that she was more anxious to reëstablish good government than to hold the reins herself. Herodian says that she made an effort to bring back good morals and the ancient dignified demeanor. She caused to be chosen sixteen Senators, the most eminent for experience and integrity of life, to form an imperial council, and without their approval no measures were carried into execution. The people, the army, the Senate, the historian assures us, were delighted with this new form of government, which replaced the most insolent of tyrannies by a sort of aristocracy. From the time of Commodus to that of Constantine, Rome had no better government than that which was inspired by the genius and ability of Mammæa; and

if the organization and the subordination which existed in the time of Trajan had still prevailed, the rule of this remarkable woman would have equalled in uprightness and beneficence that of any period in the history of the Empire.

The care of Mammæa in the education of her son was rewarded by its good effect upon his character. Virtue for him never lost its charm, and a fearless advocacy of the right made him respected by all. He inscribed over the entrance to his palace, and had the heralds proclaim when criminals were chastised, these words, which it is probable his mother may have learned from her interview with Origen: *Do not to another what you would not have done to yourself.*

While Mammæa was not jealous of public honors and titles, she was avaricious in regard to the affections of her son; there she could not endure a rival. With her consent, he married the daughter of a patrician; but his love for his young wife, as much as his respect for his father-in-law, caused Mammæa to have the latter executed on a charge of treason and to banish the empress into Africa. It is somewhat derogatory to the character of Alexander if, as Dion assures us, he lamented the fate of his wife but durst not oppose it. How his second wife fared with his mother we do not know. Her name was Sallustia Orbiana. On a medallion she is represented as wearing a diadem; the other side of the medal is inscribed with the words *FECVNDITAS TEMPORVM,* and there Orbiana is shown seated, while Fecundity, kneeling before her, holds a horn of plenty and carries two children.

The faults of Mammæa were avarice and her insistence upon dominating over her son after he had attained the years of manhood; and these errors in the end brought about the ruin of herself and Alexander. The people

were glad of a respite after the excesses of Caracalla and Elagabalus; but they were not prepared for an empress-regent who spent nothing on entertainments and gave no donations, or for an emperor whose policy was formed on Plato's *Republic*. Julian, who characterized the Cæsars, represents Alexander Severus sitting sadly on the steps of the hall where the emperors and the gods are banqueting; Silenus mocks at him and at his mother, who hoards her treasure; while Justice consents to chastise his murderers, but has little sympathy for "the poor fool, the great simpleton, who in a corner bewails his misfortune."

Only a strong man who could manage the army as Severus had done could save himself in the Rome of that day. When Maximin, a barbarian of immense personal strength and lifelong military experience, headed a revolt in the army, the soldiers were quite ready to believe that the Empire had long enough been ruled by "a parsimonious woman and a pusillanimous boy." While on an expedition, the emperor endeavored to maintain peace by making presents of gold to the Germans; this, above all things, was displeasing to soldiers who, besides being eager to ply their trade, expected to gain gold by war rather than by it to purchase peace. The emperor was slain in his tent, after reigning thirteen years, and his mother, who had been at all times the real ruler, perished with him.

Alexander had favored the enemies of the ancient gods, and even decided to the advantage of the Christians when there occurred a dispute in regard to some land in Rome which they claimed in opposition to certain innkeepers. "It is better," he said, "that this spot should be occupied by a house of prayer than by a house of debauchery." Mammæa has even been claimed for Christianity; but on her coins she was represented as the beneficent Juno, and at her death the Senate decreed her apotheosis. The

end of paganism was not yet. It was to prove its lingering vitality by its fierce and final death struggles under Decius and Diocletian.

From this time there was a quick succession of emperors, most of whom were slain almost as soon as created. The State was becoming constantly more disorganized. Every province desired its own emperor; and down to the time of Diocletian, civil war was almost constant. Morals did not improve, and families took on more and more the appearance of Oriental establishments. We read of one emperor, Carinus, in the course of a few months taking successively no less than nine wives, each of whom was divorced to make room for the next. In his time, the palace was filled with dancers and prostitutes, who were even invited to the imperial table. Though morality suffered in the palace and among the nobility, among the common and middle-class people there was working a leaven which provided a new and more effective argument for the ancient purity of manners.

The status and condition of women underwent no legal change during this period. Their manner of life remained very much the same, for in those days there were no inventions such as in modern times change the whole aspect of social life within fifty years; but all the time there was passing away from among the people that ancient spirit which we now speak of as classic. Art was depreciating; the old religion was living on its past. Imagination was dead, and consequently creation had ceased. Paganism, that had learned to satisfy itself with the black stone of Elagabalus, had no need of art. Statues were still made, temples were frequently built; but there was no original genius. The Christianity of that early time did not favor art. In literature, the educated had also to depend on the past, except as they were satisfied with

productions so inferior that nothing save accident can explain their preservation. The old Roman largeness of life was no more, and even the joyousness which had associated itself with some phases of paganism had departed. The twilight preceding the dark ages was deepening; the cycle of history was again falling toward the lowest point of its orbit.

In the Museum of the Capitol, there is one bust of an empress in which it is easy to fancy that one sees typified the spiritlessness of the life of the woman of the period. It is that of the Empress Salonina, the wife of Gallienus. The face is finely featured, but profoundly sad; it reminds one more of a pictured saint of the Middle Ages than of a pagan Roman empress. The hair, parted in the middle, hangs in a plain loop behind; there is none of that gay and frequently bizarre dressing which characterized the heads of the women of a former time. We can account partly for Salonina's sad demeanor. Her husband brought home one Pipa, the fair-haired daughter of a barbarian king; this Pipa he not only made his concubine, but seated her on the throne, beside the empress. Salonina could only console herself with her empty honors, and occupy her mind with researches into the mazy philosophy of the Neo-platonists. It has been thought, on account of a medal bearing her image and the words *in pace,* that she became a Christian; but, though undoubtedly she was greatly interested in the tenets of Christianity, and though her husband, it may be by her advice, published a decree of toleration in regard to the growing faith, the Church could not have admitted one who built a temple to a pagan goddess and never abjured the practice of the old religion. The countenance of Salonina is a type of the face of the ancient life, out of which the light has departed and which has not yet become illumined by the hope inherent in the new faith.

Religious ideas were now greatly confused. There were many who were not prepared to abandon the old gods and who were yet impressed with the new doctrine. One lady built a chapel in which she burnt incense before statues of Jesus, Pythagoras, Homer, and others. Frequently, in the persecutions, noble women were obliged to offer sacrifices in order to prove to the judges that they were not Christians. In many cases, the historians of the new religion claimed for adherents those who were only tolerant inquirers. Even in those days, the high position which a lady held made the bishops anxious to claim her as an adherent, before her conduct had become conformed to the Christian requirements.

The ancient deities were ready to take their departure, since even those who consistently supported the State religion retained but little faith in them; but Diocletian proved himself not only a firm ruler but also a lover of the old system. His decree ran: "The Christians oppose themselves to the laws of the State, which enjoin the worship of the gods; let them either sacrifice or suffer the penalty." Even the imperial household was to be put to the test, and it is believed that it was with reluctance that the emperor's wife and daughter burned the grains of incense.

In the province governed by Constantius, however, the edict was carried out with great lukewarmness; and soon the son of Constantius sat on the throne of Diocletian, and by his side was the Christian Helena. In this woman we see the transition from paganism to the new religion. Yet there is no clear record of her conversion; there is no mark in her life to indicate that it was in any moral sense created anew. So it was with Roman society. Women intrigued and took part in sensual indulgence and cruel revenge after Constantine had seen the Cross in

the sky, just as they had done before. The new doctrine was a leaven which required many centuries to spread; but in the meantime the ancient paganism, with all its grandeur and all its weakness, had disappeared, just as the ancient type of Roman womanhood had given place to a new womanhood of conglomerate nationality, with more privilege but not more character.

In the days of Valentinian, when the pagan worship was definitely prohibited, the orator Symmachus represented the old religion as an aged matron pleading thus for tolerance: "Most excellent princes, fathers of your country, pity and respect my age, which has hitherto flowed in an uninterrupted course of piety. Since I do not repent, permit me to continue in the practice of my ancient rites. Since I am born free, allow me to enjoy my domestic institutions. This religion has reduced the world under my laws. These rites have repelled Hannibal from the city and the Gauls from the Capitol. Were my gray hairs reserved for such intolerable disgrace? I am ignorant of the new system I am required to adopt; but I am well assured that the correction of old age is always an ungrateful and ignominious office."

The history of the Roman woman we have essayed to recount has run contemporaneously with the life of this worship of the old gods. What she was that religion largely made her. In it she found inspiration for her brave deeds; its ideals were the expression of her love of beauty; it strengthened her fortitude in times of trial; and when we remember her frailties, charity must also remind us that, apart from her own nature and the custom of her time, this religion was all that she had.

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